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GUESTS AT THE DIVI
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Aruba TODAY

On Top Of The News Email: news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel: +297 582-7800 Saturday, February 7, 2015



In this April 28, 2007, photo, high school senior Kayla Mueller marches in a walk in Prescott, Ariz., promoting aid to the Darfur region of Sudan. A statement that appeared on a militant website commonly used by the Islamic State group claimed that Mueller was killed in a Jordanian airstrike on Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, on the outskirts of the northern Syrian city of Raqqa, the militant group's main stronghold. The IS statement could not be independently verified.
(AP Photo/Prescott Daily Courier, Nathaniel Kastelic)

Islamic State Insists Jordanian Airstrike Killed US Hostage -US Officials Skeptical

BEIRUT (AP) — Islamic State extremists claimed that an American woman held hostage by the group was killed Friday in a Jordanian airstrike in Syria, but the government of Jordan dismissed the statement as “criminal propaganda” and the U.S. said it had not seen any evidence to corroborate the report. The woman was identified as Kayla Jean Mueller, an American who went to Syria to do aid work, but there was no independent verification of the claim.

Continued on Page 2

ISIS

Continued from front

The statement appeared on a militant website commonly used by the group and was also distributed by Islamic State-affiliated Twitter users. The 26-year-old Mueller, of Prescott, Arizona, is the only known remaining U.S. hostage held by the Islamic State group. If the death is confirmed, she would be the fourth American to die while being held by Islamic State militants. Three other Americans — journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, and aid worker Peter Kasig — were beheaded by the group. Journalist Austin Tice, of Houston, Texas, disappeared in August 2012 while covering Syria's civil war. It's not clear what enti-

ty is holding him, but it is not believed to be the Islamic State group or the Syrian government, his family has said. The announcement was the second time this week that extremists announced the death of a hostage. They released a video Tuesday showing Jordanian air force Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, also 26, being burned to death in a cage in gruesome images that caused outrage in Jordan and the rest of the region. Al-Kaseasbeh, whose F-16 came down in December while conducting airstrikes as part of a campaign against the militants by a U.S.-led coalition, was believed to have been killed in early January. Friday's statement said Mueller was killed in the militants' stronghold of Raqqa in northern Syria during Muslim prayers — which



Jordanian Air Force fighter jets fly near Karak, Jordan. Islamic State extremists claimed that an American woman held hostage by the group was killed Friday in a Jordanian airstrike in northern Syria, but the government of Jordan dismissed the statement as "criminal propaganda" and the U.S. said it had not seen any evidence to corroborate the report.

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usually take place around midday — in airstrikes that targeted "the same location for more than an hour." It published photos purportedly of the bombed site, showing a severely damaged three-story building, but offered no proof or images of Mueller. The statement said no Islamic State militants were killed in the airstrikes, raising further questions about the veracity of the claim. Jordanian government spokesman Mohammed al-Momani said it was investigating. "But as a first reaction, we think it's illogical and we are highly skeptical about it. How could they identify a Jordanian warplane ... in the sky? What was the American lady doing in a weapons warehouse?" al-Momani said. "It's part of their criminal propaganda. They have lied that our pilot is alive and tried to negotiate, claiming he is alive while they had killed him weeks before," he added. American officials said they also were looking into the report.

Bernadette Meehan, the spokeswoman for President Barack Obama's National Security Council, said the White House has "not at this time seen any evidence that corroborates" the claim.

"We are obviously deeply

concerned by these reports," she added.

A U.S. official said coalition aircraft did conduct bombing near Raqqa on Friday, but had nothing to confirm the claim that the American captive was killed in the airstrike. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the issue with reporters.

White House spokesman Eric Schultz told reporters the U.S. coordinates with the Jordanian air force as they fly airstrikes. He wouldn't say whether the U.S. was aware of the hostage's location.

Mueller had been working in Turkey assisting Syrian refugees, according to a 2013 article in The Daily Courier, her hometown newspaper. She told the paper that she was drawn to help with the situation in Syria.

"For as long as I live, I will not let this suffering be normal," she said. "It's important to stop and realize what we have, why we have it and how privileged we are. And from that place, start caring and get a lot done." According to the newspaper, Mueller had been working with the humanitarian aid agency Support to Life, as well as a local organization that helped female Syrian refugees develop skills. □



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Kerry presses Iran FM on nuke deal outline by end of March

MATTHEW LEE
 Associated Press

MUNICH (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on Friday pressed Iran's foreign minister on the Obama administration's desire to reach the outline of a nuclear deal by the end of March, in keeping with a target set by negotiators last year. Kerry delivered the message to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif during a two-hour meeting on the sidelines of an international security conference in Munich, according to a U.S. official. Kerry "reiterated our desire to move toward a political framework by the end of March," the official said. "They agreed to stay in close touch and that they would try to meet again soon." The official was not authorized to discuss the meeting publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany will resume negotiations with Iran soon, with an eye on the March target they set in November after missing two earlier deadlines. Their ultimate goal is to reach a final agreement by July that would, in exchange for a lifting of sanctions, address international concerns that Iran may be using a civilian atomic energy program as cover to try to develop nuclear weapons. □

Obama: US must resist urge to 'overreach' abroad



National Security Adviser Susan Rice speaks at the Brookings Institution to outline President Barack Obama's foreign policy priorities, Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, in Washington. President Barack Obama says the US must resist the urge to "overreach" abroad, as he outlined a new national security strategy Friday that is meant to serve as a blueprint for his final two years in office.

(AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

JULIE PACE
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama, outlining a new national security blueprint for his last two years in office, warned against American "overreach" abroad Friday, even as he cast the U.S. as an indispensable force in combating global challenges including terrorism, climate change and cyber threats. The 29-page document released by the White House hews closely to Obama's long-held views and forecasts no major shifts in the military campaign against

Islamic State militants or in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Obama said threat of terrorism against the U.S. "has diminished, but still persists" and vowed to degrade extremist groups like the Islamic State using counterterrorism operations and global coalitions, not large-scale, American-led ground wars. "The United States will always defend our interests and uphold our commitments to allies and partners," he wrote in an introduction to the White House strategy paper. "But we have to make hard choices among many compet-

ing priorities and we must always resist the overreach that comes when we make decisions based upon fear." The president is required by law to send Congress a national security strategy annually. However, most presidents, including Obama, have done so only sporadically. Obama's only previous memo to lawmakers came in 2010 and formalized his desire to broaden U.S. national security posture beyond anti-terror campaigns. Obama's critics have accused the president of putting his desire to keep

the U.S. out of overseas conflicts ahead of the need for more robust action against the world's bad actors. Some members of Congress have called for Obama to send more American ground troops to the Middle East to combat the Islamic State group, while also pushing for the White House to authorize shipments of defensive weapons to Ukraine to help its beleaguered military in the fight against Russian-backed separatists. Administration officials have said that Obama is reconsidering his opposition to giving Ukraine lethal aid, though he continues to have concerns about the effectiveness of that step. The president's blueprint was met with predictable criticism from congressional Republicans. Sen. Lindsey Graham said Obama's foreign policy doctrine had "led the world into chaos" and left the U.S. "less secure and at greater risk." For much of his presidency, Obama has sought to recalibrate the focus of U.S. foreign policy away from the Middle East and toward fast-growing regions like Asia and Africa. He's made numerous trips to Asia, in particular, and National Security Adviser Susan Rice announced Friday that Obama would be hosting state visits this year for Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping. □

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Special US Benghazi panel to query top officials

MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A special U.S. House committee looking into the deadly Benghazi, Libya, attacks in 2012 will interview a host of current and former high-ranking Obama administration officials as it speeds the pace of the investigation.

The panel's Republican chairman Rep. Trey Gowdy has previously said he will ask Hillary Rodham Clinton, secretary of state at the time of the attacks, to testify at a public hearing before the 12-member committee. He said Friday that appearance should occur "as soon as possible." Clinton is widely expected to run for president in 2016.

Other high-ranking officials he said he intends to interview include former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and former CIA director David Petraeus, as well as White House chief



The House Select Committee on Benghazi Chairman Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., left, confers with Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., the ranking member on Capitol Hill in Washington, at the start of the panel's third public hearing to investigate the 2012 attacks on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, where a violent mob killed four Americans, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens.

(AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

of staff Denis McDonough and national security adviser Susan Rice.

Gowdy also said he wants to interview Cheryl Mills, a longtime Clinton aide who was her chief of staff when the attacks occurred at the U.S. diplomatic outpost

in Benghazi, killing Ambassador Chris Stephens and three other Americans.

The lawmaker said last week he was frustrated at the slow pace of the investigation and was going to "ratchet it up." Democrats maintain the investiga-

tion is politically motivated and aimed at damaging Clinton's presidential prospects.

Gowdy said Friday that the interviews with the high-ranking officials will begin as soon as April, after the panel interviews 22 potential witnesses who work for the State Department or have knowledge of the attacks.

He called the timeline for new interviews "ambitious" but said he intends to "stay with this schedule and will issue subpoenas if necessary."

Clinton spokesman Nick Merrill said Friday that a reporter "should check in with" Democrats on the Benghazi panel for a response to Gowdy's letter. Gowdy also plans to interview former UN Ambassador Thomas Pickering and Adm. Mike Mullen, who chaired an independent panel that reviewed the September 2012 attacks.

Pickering was President George H.W. Bush's U.N. envoy, and Mullen was the top U.S. general under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

Their report harshly criticized the State Department for its security posture in the months before militants stormed the Benghazi facility. But House Republican members said their review was incomplete and lacked independence.

Rep. Elijah Cummings, the top Democrat on the Benghazi panel, said it was not clear what additional questions Gowdy and committee Republicans want to answer.

A majority of the 20 people named as likely witnesses "have already provided information to Congress through prior interviews and testimony - in some cases multiple times - during seven previous congressional investigations," Cummings said. □



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Judge rejects 3rd bid to move marathon bombing trial

DENISE LAVOIE

AP Legal Affairs Writer

BOSTON (AP) — A federal judge on Friday rejected a third request from lawyers for the Boston Marathon bombing suspect to move his trial outside Massachusetts, saying jury selection so far has shown people are capable of being fair and impartial in the place most affected by the deadly attack.

Judge George O'Toole Jr. said in his written ruling that "substantial progress" has been made toward a goal of finding 70 potential jurors. Once that number is reached, prosecutors and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's defense team will then be allowed to eliminate 23 people each for strategic reasons.

A panel of 12 jurors and six alternatives will be

chosen to decide whether Tsarnaev is guilty. If he's found guilty, the same jury will decide whether he lives or dies.

Tsarnaev, 21, is accused in twin bombings near the marathon finish line on April 15, 2013. Three people were killed and more than 260 were injured in the attack. Prosecutors say Tsarnaev and his older brother, Tamerlan, carried out the

bombings to retaliate against the U.S. for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Tsarnaev has pleaded not guilty. His brother was killed in a shootout with police days after the bombings. Tsarnaev's lawyers insist that he cannot get a fair trial in Massachusetts because many here were personally affected by the bombings and many already believe he's guilty.

In their latest change-of-venue motion, filed Jan. 22, the defense argued that its analysis of more than 1,350 juror questionnaires showed that 68 percent of potential jurors said they believe Tsarnaev is guilty. They said 69 percent identified some personal connection or allegiance to the marathon or people injured in the bombings. □

Woman, 9-year-old daughter found hanged in US

BROCKTON, Mass. (AP) —

A woman who came here from Cabo Verde about a decade ago and her 9-year-old daughter were found hanged Friday in the basement of their home by police officers who later discovered what authorities called "written information" that's being reviewed to see if it sheds light on what happened. The bodies of Ariana Rosa-Soares, 32, and her daughter, Marley Soares, were found shortly before 10 a.m. in their home south of Boston, after a concerned family friend called police asking for assistance at the house, District Attorney Timothy Cruz said.

Cruz didn't disclose the contents of the written



Jose Rosa talks on a phone outside the Morgan Street home in Brockton, Mass., where his daughter, Ariana Rosa, 29, and his granddaughter Marley Soares, 9, were found dead Friday, Feb. 6, 2015.

(AP Photo/Marc Vasconcellos)

information found at the scene and said it was too early to say whether the deaths were murders or a murder-suicide. He said the girl's father was interviewed by state police, and it didn't appear to be a case of domestic violence.

"It's a terrible situation which we are going to get to the end of when we get all the information together," Cruz said.

Rosa-Soares also had an 11-year-old daughter who wasn't home when the bodies were found, authorities said. Brockton and state police are investigating and medical examiners will be performing autopsies to try to determine the cause and manner of the deaths. □

Report: No evidence of sex abuse at immigration lockup

SETH ROBBINS

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Department of Homeland Security investigators have found no evidence of sexual abuse and harassment at a Texas immigration lockup that houses women and children, according to a report released Friday.

The inspector general launched the investigation after a woman being held at the facility in Karnes City reported she'd heard rumors about women being removed from their cells at night to have sex with guards in the laundry room. Investigators interviewed 33 people and spent 380

hours investigating several allegations made by the woman, all of which were found to be untrue, according to the report.

Women interviewed by investigators denied engaging in any sexual activity with guards and said they received no preferential treatment in

exchange for sexual favors, according to the report. Allegations that a detainee was impregnated by a guard were determined to be false after she voluntarily submitted to a pregnancy test, which turned up negative, the report said. A review of 360 hours of surveillance video footage

from the laundry room also failed to show any of the women being escorted there after hours. And investigators found no evidence that guards had deposited money into the commissary accounts of the women or paid for rental of apartments upon their release. □

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Canada court rules doctors can help ill patients die



Linda Jarrett reads through notes at Dying with Dignity offices in Toronto, Friday, Feb. 6, 2015. Canada's highest court Friday, unanimously struck down a ban on doctor-assisted suicide for mentally competent patients with terminal illnesses.

(AP Photo/The Canadian Press, Chris Young)

CHARMAINE NORONHA

Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canada's highest court struck down a ban on doctor-assisted suicide for mentally competent patients with terminal illnesses Friday, declaring that outlawing that option deprives dying people of their dignity and autonomy.

The Supreme Court's unanimous decision reverses its own decision two decades ago and gives Parliament and provincial legislators a year to draft new legislation that recognizes the right of consenting adults who are enduring intolerable suffering to seek medical help ending their lives. The current ban on doctor-assisted suicide stands until then.

The judgment said the ban infringes on the life, liberty and security of individuals under Canada's constitution. It had been illegal in Canada to counsel, aid or abet a suicide, an offense carrying a maximum prison sentence of 14 years.

The ruling immediately triggered emotional responses from both sides of the debate, and Justice Minister Peter MacKay said the conservative government will take its time to act on it. "This is a sensitive issue for many Canadians, with deeply held beliefs on both sides. We will study the decision and ensure all perspectives on this difficult issue are heard," MacKay said.

The decision was spurred by cases brought by the families of two British Columbia women, who have since died.

In its ruling, the court quoted one of the women's wishes: "What I fear is a death that negates, as opposed to concludes, my life," Gloria Taylor said. "I

do not want to die slowly, piece by piece. I do not want to waste away unconscious in a hospital bed. I do not want to die wracked with pain."

Taylor was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a degenerative neurological illness also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. She had won a constitutional exemption at a lower court for a medically assisted death in 2012, but that decision was overturned in subsequent appeals. She died of an infection later the same year.

The court stated that "by leaving people like Ms. Taylor to endure intolerable suffering, it impinges on their security of person."

The decision reversed a Canadian Supreme Court ruling in 1993. At the time, the justices were primarily concerned that vulnerable people could not be properly protected under physician-assisted suicide.

The top court said Friday that doctors are capable of assessing the competence of patients to consent, and found there is no evidence that the elderly or people with disabilities are vulnerable to being talked into ending their lives.

"The law allows people in this situation to request palliative sedation, refuse artificial nutrition and hydration, or request the removal of life-sustaining medical equipment, but denies the right to request a physician's assistance in dying," the ruling noted.

The other woman whose case helped spur Friday's ruling, Kay Carter, was diagnosed with a degenerative spinal cord condition. At age 89, Carter travelled to Switzerland, where assisted suicide is allowed. Her family rejoiced at the ruling Friday. □

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US Financial Front:

More Americans are finally seeing something new: A pay raise

JOSH BOAK

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the U.S. economy has steadily recovered from the Great Recession, the critical missing piece has been a painful lack of pay raises for many Americans. Their pain may be easing. Friday's jobs report signaled that raises have finally begun to flow through an economy in which, once you factor in inflation, most people earn less than when the Great Recession struck in 2007.

The average hourly wage jumped 0.5 percent between December and January — the sharpest monthly gain since 2008 — the government's survey of businesses found. The average has now risen 2.2 percent over the past 12 months to \$24.75, comfortably above inflation.

So if you've gone without a meaningful raise, should you expect one?

Skeptics still have doubts. But the quickening rate of hiring provides reason to hope.

The government's figures don't pinpoint which occupations have benefited most from rising pay. Wages have risen at a slightly slower pace for non-managers, indicating that bosses are pocketing much of the gains. Still, corporate announcements and job postings indicate that wage growth has been extending to a broad range of industries and professions.

Job listings on Indeed.com,

for example, show stronger demand for truckers, health care professionals and technology workers, all of which points to higher

finally forced companies to loosen their grip on pay to attract and keep the best workers.

Employers have added

es.

Ford Motor Co. has announced that up to 500 of its lowest-paid factory workers will receive a 48

percent pay raise to \$28.50 an hour. Only 20 percent of its employees can be in the lowest tier, so Ford had to raise wages to hire 1,550 workers to make pickup trucks in Missouri and Michigan. Other major companies, including Aetna and the Gap, have also announced pay increases. Some smaller firms are enjoying a level of growth that has begun to deliver year-end bonuses and raises. Christopher Falcone is among the beneficiaries. Falcone, 32, has been

working as an accountant at a Chicago real estate investment company for the past six months. He said he just received a 3.5 percent salary increase and a 4 percent cash bonus — enough to plan a visit to Disney World to celebrate with his family.

"It's our 10-year wedding anniversary," Falcone said. "We got married there, so we're going back and we're taking our kids."

Other workers are negotiating higher salaries after reviewing the pay levels advertised on job sites. David Castaneda felt that the 3 percent raise he recently received didn't fully value his performance as a financial analyst at a cemetery and mortuary outside Los Angeles.

So the 27-year-old Castaneda researched other job opportunities and presented the findings to his boss.

The result? A 31 percent pay increase to \$85,000.

"The opportunities are out there and wages are being pushed up," Castaneda said. "If everyone were to do this, they would get it. But most people are afraid that their boss would say no and let them go."

Many Americans, of course, have yet to enjoy pay bumps regardless of a tightening labor pool. The wage figures from the Labor Department are averages. So even when the averages improve, millions of workers continue to endure stagnant incomes and rising expenses. □



A line worker assembles a Ford Focus at the Ford Michigan Assembly plant in Wayne, Mich. The jobs report on Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, signaled that raises have finally begun to flow through an economy in which, once you factor in inflation, most people earn less than when the Great Recession struck in 2007.

(AP Photo/Paul Sancya)

wages, said Tara Sinclair, chief economist at Indeed.com and a professor at George Washington University.

"America is really getting back to work, and that's the first step to getting better paychecks," Sinclair said.

The pace of hiring has accelerated 34 percent since 2013. That growth has reduced the number of job seekers and made it harder for employers to find talented employees. The trend, the theory goes, has

3.2 million jobs over the 12 months — including 257,000 in January, 329,000 in December and a sizzling 423,000 in November.

Some economists note that pay figures tend to be volatile from month to month and that January's blowout average increase might be unsustainable. Still, each additional job increases the number of paychecks in the United States, which drives greater consumer spending.

And that tends to fuel further hiring and higher wag-

es. Ford Motor Co. has announced that up to 500 of its lowest-paid factory workers will receive a 48 percent pay raise to \$28.50 an hour. Only 20 percent of its employees can be in the lowest tier, so Ford had to raise wages to hire 1,550 workers to make pickup trucks in Missouri and Michigan. Other major companies, including Aetna and the Gap, have also announced pay increases. Some smaller firms are enjoying a level of growth that has begun to deliver year-end bonuses and raises. Christopher Falcone is among the beneficiaries. Falcone, 32, has been

American Living:

In US Pond Hockey, no reason to have one big fish

PAT BORZI

© 2015 New York Times

MINNEAPOLIS - For one long weekend every January, nearly 1,500 men and women in skates converge on frozen Lake Nokomis to revisit their childhoods. The event, the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships, recalls a simpler time, when children from the Upper Midwest developed their skating and stickhandling skills on wind-swept frozen lakes and backyard rinks, not at indoor complexes with screaming parents. "We're celebrating the hockey of our youth," Carson Kipfer, a tournament co-commissioner, said. Camaraderie, bragging rights and beer are the primary attractions for a 10-year-old tournament that offers no prize money and only one trophy: the Golden Shovel, an oversize, gold-painted snow shovel on which the names of winning teams are etched. Last month, swishing skates, clacking sticks and the occasional barking dog provided the



Tom McGinn, left, and Matt Gehr of the team He Suits, He Scores, battle for the puck with Dan Donette, of Wright Homes/FHIT, the defending champions at the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships at Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis, Jan. 16, 2015. Jokey names like He Suits, He Scores, whose players wear tuxedo shirts, are widespread in the growing pastime of pond hockey.

(Angela Jimenez/The New York Times)

soundtrack for 250 teams in six divisions, competing on 25 rinks laid out 50 yards from shore.

The hotly contested open division featured former college players and the

occasional retired pro. Curt Wright, a Minnesota State product who has won the open division five times, said he always considered his team the best in the United States.

But in pond hockey, national championships are not so definitive.

USA Hockey, the sport's American governing body, started its own Pond Hockey National Championships in Eagle River, Wisconsin, in 2006, the same year the Minnesota tournament began. Eagle River now draws more than 300 teams.

So which is the real championship?

USA Hockey sanctions both, having added the Minnesota tournament this year. It also sanctions the U.P. Pond Hockey Championships in St. Ignace, Michigan, which does not claim to be a national championship, but could. Teams from 45 states have participated since its inception in 2008, said the tournament's director, Mark Sposito, and 216 teams signed up for this year's event, which begins Thursday.

Ashley Bevan, USA Hockey's senior director of adult play, will not take sides.

"I think they're all great outdoor events," he said. USA Hockey officials have discussed creating a definitive national tournament and adding the championship game to the NHL Win-

ter Classic, Bevan said. But numerous logistical questions must be resolved, like where to hold it and who pays for it.

Many pond hockey players and officials add one more question: Why bother? One championship tournament, they fear, might ruin the others. Determining a true champion of pond hockey risks mucking up a good thing. "It doesn't matter," said Fred Haberman, the Minnesota tournament's founder and a co-commissioner. "Whether it's your backyard or a tournament with 300 teams, we're all having a good time. As long as people are going out and being a kid and having fun doing it, you're a champion. That's the whole point of it." In the last decade, pond hockey has grown from a curiosity into one of hockey's most popular genres. The success of the World Pond Hockey Championships in Plaster Rock, New Brunswick, which began in 2002 and features teams from Canada, the United States and more than a dozen other countries, inspired similar events in the United States.

USA Hockey does not track pond hockey players specifically, but it said overall adult participation had more than doubled in the last decade, to 167,527 in the 2013-14 season from 75,974 in 2004-5. Labatt, the Canadian brewery, sponsors 13 tournaments in New York, New England and the Midwest.

"This is a question I'm asked a lot: Why do so many people come to play?" Sposito said. "Because they've never played outdoors and want to see what it's like, or they played outdoors and want to do it again." Haberman, who still plays in the Minnesota tournament, said, "I wanted to create something that reunites us with friends we played with as kids, unstructured, without the pressure of coaches and parents."

Continued on page 27

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Putin, Ukraine leader to hold 4-way call on peace plan

V. ISACHENKOV
Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Talks among the leaders of Russia, France and Germany on a peace initiative for Ukraine ended early Saturday with an announcement that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart would discuss a proposal to end the fighting in a four-way telephone call this weekend. The planned discussions Sunday involving Putin, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and the leaders of France and Germany came amid urgent shuttle diplomacy to halt the recent intensification of fighting in Ukraine and suggested that a cease-fire proposal was still on the table, although there was no firm announcement of progress.

Even getting the arms to fall silent would be a significant diplomatic breakthrough. The resurgent fighting has fueled fears the conflict is threatening Europe's overall security and has prompted the U.S. to consider giving lethal weapons to Ukraine, an option opposed by European nations.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande came to Moscow on Friday on the second leg of a hastily arranged trip to try to halt the spiraling conflict. They had met with Ukraine's president the previous day in Kiev.

The contents of their proposal have not been revealed, but it is aimed at salvaging a peace plan agreed to in September in

Minsk, Belarus.

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said efforts were moving forward.

"Work is currently under way on drafting the text of a possible joint document on the implementation of the Minsk agreement, which

sanctions bite down ever harder on Russia's economy. More than 5,300 people have been killed since fighting began in April, according to a U.N. tally, and the bloodshed has markedly increased over the past two weeks.

Ukrainian government forces since April. Russia denies the claims.

A cease-fire deal was reached in September, but both sides have repeatedly violated it and the fighting has risen sharply in the past two weeks.

and Hollande would use "all our power with direct visits to Kiev and to Moscow today to stop the bloodshed as soon as possible and to fill the Minsk agreement with life."

"We are convinced that there's no military solution to this conflict," Merkel added. "But we also know that it's completely open whether we will manage to achieve a cease-fire with these talks."

She rejected reports that she and Hollande were prepared to offer more territory to the Ukraine separatists, saying, "I will never deal with territorial questions over another country."

In Brussels, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden questioned Putin's willingness to seek peace.

Putin "continues to call for new peace plans as his troops roll through the Ukrainian countryside and he absolutely ignores every agreement that his country has signed in the past and that he has signed," Biden said.

Biden insisted the 28-nation European Union and the United States needed to stand together and support the government of Ukraine with financial and political aid.

Biden was to join U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Poroshenko, Merkel, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and other top world leaders for a three-day security conference in Munich that is expected to be dominated by the conflict in Ukraine. □



Russian President Vladimir Putin, center, gestures during his talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, left, and French President Francois Hollande, right, in Moscow, Friday, Feb. 6, 2015. In a top-level diplomatic dash, French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel flew to Moscow on Friday to seek a cease-fire and then a lasting peace for war-racked eastern Ukraine.

(AP Photo/A. Zemlianichenko)

would include the proposals made by the president of Ukraine and President Putin," Peskov said after the talks in the Kremlin ended. He said Merkel, Putin, Hollande and Poroshenko would hold discussions by telephone on Sunday. A similar four-party conversation took place in mid-December, before the recent upsurge in fighting.

The urgent diplomacy comes as Western anxiety over the conflict grows and

In Washington, the meeting was viewed with skepticism.

"I'm not going to say it's a positive sign that they're listening," State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said of Russia. "They've been listening. They just haven't been acting."

The United States and other Western countries contend Russia has supplied troops and equipment to the separatists in eastern Ukraine who have been fighting

"Everyone is aware that the first step must be the cease-fire, but that it cannot suffice. We must seek a global solution," Hollande told journalists in Paris before heading to Moscow.

The top NATO commander, U.S. Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove, said Thursday that Russia continues to supply the separatists with heavy, state-of-the-art weapons, air defenses and fighters.

In Berlin, Merkel said she

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Shiite rebels take power in Yemen, fan fears of civil war

AHMED AL-HAJ
Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — Yemen's Shiite rebels proclaimed a formal takeover of the Arab nation Friday, dissolving parliament in a dramatic move that completes their power grab in the region's poorest nation where an al-Qaida terrorist offshoot flourishes.

Angry demonstrators protested the rebels' move in street rallies in several cities, raising fears of a full-blown sectarian conflict between Yemen's new Shiite tribal rulers, known as Houthis, and the disenfranchised Sunni majority.

The unrest could strengthen Yemen's al-Qaida branch, considered the world's most dangerous wing of the terror movement, and complicate U.S. counter-terrorism



Yemenis applaud at a ceremony where the Houthi rebels who now control the country announced their intent to form a new government, at the Republican Palace in Sanaa, Yemen, Feb. 6, 2015. January's abdication of President Ali Abdullah Saleh and a resulting power vacuum has changed little for ordinary Yemenis, already accustomed to a barely-functioning state.

(Tyler Hicks/The New York Times)

operations in Saudi Arabia's southern neighbor. While

Houthi rebels are bitter enemies to al-Qaida, they also are hostile to the United States, and frosty to the predominantly Sunni Saudis.

The region's Shiite powerhouse, Iran, looms as a potential key backer.

White House spokesman Eric Schultz said the United

States was "deeply concerned with this unilateral step," but insisted the Houthis' declaration as the true government of Yemen following a four-month insurrection would not affect U.S. counterterrorism efforts there.

Houthi supporters filled the central square in Sanaa, the Yemeni capital, to celebrate the culmination of their coup. They exploded firecrackers and waved banners bearing their slogan "Death to America, death to Israel, a curse on the Jews and victory to Islam." The menacing message is similar to those chanted by Shiite militants in Iraq and Lebanon's dominant Shiite militia, Hezbollah. Houthi leaders declared that their Revolutionary Committee — a panel of top security and intelligence officials — was Yemen's new supreme governing authority. □

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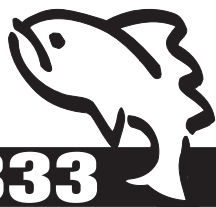


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Obama's encounter with Dalai Lama riles China

ANDREW JACOBS
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BEIJING - China and the United States have worked out a reliable pas de deux over the Dalai Lama, the Nobel laureate and Tibetan spiritual leader, whom Beijing sometimes describes as a "wolf in sheep's clothing."

It goes like this: Chinese leaders warn the White House against granting the Dalai Lama a public audience, and the U.S. president either ignores the threats of diplomatic fallout or finds a way to hold a meeting that will result in the least offense to Beijing. Since taking office, President Barack Obama has met with the Dalai Lama on three occasions, each time within the privacy of the White House rather than during the kind of

public event that might prompt outside indignation on the part of Chinese leaders.

Then, on Thursday, Obama was handed a diplomatically novel way to express his admiration for the Dalai Lama when the two exchanged greetings at the annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington and the president described him as a "good friend."

Video footage of the event showed Obama clasping his hands in a gesture of reverence and then waving at the Dalai Lama with a broad smile. In a speech, he described the 79-year-old exiled Buddhist leader as a "powerful example of what it means to practice compassion," one "who inspired us to speak up for the freedom and dignity of

all human beings."

The highly public episode infuriated Beijing, which accused Obama of cynically orchestrating the encounter and suggested it was designed to complicate China's governance of Tibet, the vast, strategically pivotal region that has bridled at Beijing's heavy-handed rule since Communist troops invaded in 1950. "The Dalai Lama has over a long period of time used the banner of religion to engage in separatist, anti-Chinese activities as a political exile," Hong Lei, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, said during a regular news conference Friday. "We oppose any foreign country allowing the Dalai Lama to visit, and oppose any country using the issue of Tibet to interfere in China's internal affairs." □



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Brazil's Petrobras names state banker Bendine as CEO

BRAD BROOKS
Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Petrobras' board of directors named a new chief executive on Friday, choosing the head of the nation's Banco do Brasil to take charge of the state-run oil company following a shake-up over a massive kickback scheme.

The selection of Aldemir Bendine, announced on Petrobras' website, failed to impress some analysts, who described the banker as "underwhelming." Shares of Petrobras dropped 6.9 percent in trading Friday.

Bendine, who has led Banco do Brasil since 2009, replaces Maria das Gracas Foster, who resigned under pressure as investigators continue unearthing a long-running kickback scheme at Petrobras. Investigators have found the oil company awarded inflated contracts to construction and engineering firms, which in turn paid back at least \$800 million. Prosecutors say some of that money was funneled into the campaign coffers of the ruling Workers' Party and its allies.

Bendine is seen as being

close to President Dilma Rousseff, but is not well-regarded in business circles. Joao Neves, Latin America director with U.S.-based Eurasia Group, said Rousseff's choice of the veteran banker is not impressive.

"The new leader at Petrobras needs to be somebody with market credentials, but also someone who is politically savvy and has the trust of the president," Neves said. "Bendine has much more of the latter."

He said that ultimately "the market will give him the benefit of the doubt, but the fact (Rousseff) chose an underwhelming name without market credentials will make the process of Petrobras regaining market credibility longer."

Because of the daunting challenges facing the debt-plagued oil firm, Neves said "it's quite possible that Dilma had other names she wanted to choose, but that they wouldn't take the job."

Petrobras is Brazil's biggest company and it's being counted on to develop massive offshore oil fields discovered in recent years



A sign for Petrobras stands at the entrance of the office building of the Brazilian oil firm, while the board of directors meets, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Friday, Feb. 6, 2015. The oil firm is in crisis amid an expanding corruption investigation into a massive and long-running kickback scheme on its contracts.

(AP Photo/Andre Penner)

off the Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo state coasts.

The fields could hold upward of 100 billion barrels

of oil, which leaders hope would propel Brazil into developed world status.

Rousseff often has referred to the oil as Brazil's "passport" to a better future, to funding rapid improvements in education, health and other crucial areas.

But Petrobras has lost billions in market value in the past year as it faces daily reports on the extent of the corruption scheme, which prosecutors say operated for well over a decade and allegedly saw millions funneled into the campaign coffers of the Workers' Party and its allies.

Charges are expected to be filed soon against dozens of politicians, including several congressmen. Carlos Lopes, a Brasilia-based analyst at the Instituto Analise consulting firm, said that the "recovery of the company's credibility is the key challenge Petrobras' new president will have to tackle."

"The government will have to give him the conditions to manage the company transparently and in an autonomous way," he said. "The government has to stop being so interventionist." □

Police seize assets of former Brazilian billionaire Batista

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Federal police went after ex-billionaire Eike Batista on Friday, seizing a Lamborghini and six other cars, additional assets and \$32,500 (90,000 reais) in cash from the homes of Brazil's once-richest man. A Federal Police statement said the assets seized by agents — which included computers, cellphones, watches and jewelry — would help guarantee potential compensation

if Batista is convicted on charges of insider trading and market manipulation. A federal judge this week froze more than \$1 billion (3 billion reais) worth of financial assets belonging to Batista, his sons, his ex-wife and his girlfriend. Batista has said he is innocent. His attorney was not immediately available for comment.

At his apex in 2012, Batista was reported to be worth \$34.5 billion, and listed at

No. 7 on the Forbes billionaires list.

The case against the oil and mining tycoon is part of a new aggressive crackdown on corruption by Brazil's rich and powerful, long accustomed to impunity. The move comes amid an unraveling scandal at the state-run oil company Petrobras over kickbacks to politicians.

Batista faces two counts of insider trading and market manipulation charges

in connection with the demise of OGX, the petroleum company that was the jewel in the crown of his business empire.

He faces a maximum prison sentence of 13 years, though as a first-time defendant, it is unlikely he would receive more than eight years if convicted on all charges.

Batista's personal life long has been fodder for celebrity scandal sheets as well. In 2013, his son Thor,

then 21, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter for running over a slum-dwelling cyclist while driving a Mercedes Benz SLR McLaren. He was sentenced to two years of community service, fined \$500,000 (1 million reais) and had his license suspended. The luxury sports car was the same model of a showcase car his father parked in the living room of the family's high-rise home. □



As middle class flees, Puerto Rico tries luring rich people

DANICA COTO
Associated Press

PALMAS DEL MAR, Puerto Rico (AP) — Bond trader Ben Eiler swapped life in suburban Georgia for an island in the Caribbean, and he didn't even have to apply for a visa.

The towering 38-year-old native of Arkansas is one of at least 250 people who've accepted Puerto Rico's

office across manicured greens, with an expansive ocean view.

"Driving to work in your flip-flops and golf cart is not bad," he says with a quick laugh.

This semi-autonomous U.S. territory sets its own tax policy, and its residents pay no federal tax on income derived locally. Mired in a recession for almost a de-

empts people from taxes on any capital gains accrued after they move and it provides an exemption from local taxes on dividends and interests if they take up permanent residence, among other conditions. A government brochure sums it up as "Sun, Sand and Zero Taxes." "Frankly, for Americans, it's sort of an unprecedented thing," said Alex Daley,

of the U.S. government. "People are getting angry about that."

The law is sparking some controversy in Puerto Rico, however, particularly among economically beleaguered middle-class workers who pay island taxes on non-investment income. Others say the strategy helps erode the U.S. federal government's tax base by diverting revenue from the mainland.

Economists also say the new residents won't do enough to rescue the island from its deep economic woes. A smarter strategy would be to focus on broadening the tax base, said Barry Bosworth, an economist with the Brookings Institution in Washington.

"Instead, Puerto Rico spends a lot of time and effort to attract a sub-population that wants special treatment and is seeking to avoid paying taxes on the mainland," he said. "It gives the appearance of being for sale."

A recent report from Standard & Poor's issued another warning: "If Puerto Rico becomes too successful at marketing itself as a tax haven, the U.S. Congress in our view would likely enact restrictions."

So far, however, at least 500 people have applied and been approved, half of whom have made the move like Eiler. He had only briefly visited Puerto Rico before settling here with his family, but he finds the environment familiar.

"We have a Walmart and Costco and P.F. Chang's," he said.

Such familiarity and the ability to move while staying within U.S. jurisdiction is a draw not offered by the Bahamas and other Caribbean destinations that have created tax incentives to lure investors.

Lawyers and tax experts in Puerto Rico say they get calls daily from people seeking to move, including managers of hedge funds or private equity funds who make most of their money from capital gains. In the U.S., long-term capital gains are taxed at 23.8 percent. The tax refugees must not have lived in Puerto Rico for six years prior to when the law was approved in order to qualify.

Their arrival bucks a trend in the other direction. From 2010 to 2014, Puerto Rico's population dropped 5 percent to 3.5 million, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Many of those who left are middle-class professionals, driven out by the lack of economic opportunity and the high cost of living.

While Puerto Ricans do not pay U.S. income taxes, except for Social Security and Medicare, they do pay the equivalent of state income taxes. The highest bracket, for those with incomes above \$62,000, is 33 percent. Act 22 has generated more than \$200 million in local real estate sales, said Juan Carlos Suarez at the Department of Economic Development and Commerce, who added that the program is not much different from the incentives offered to other sectors, including manufacturing. □



Bond trader Ben Eiler poses for a photo on the second-floor balcony of his new home in Humacao, Puerto Rico. The towering 38-year-old native of Arkansas is one of at least 250 people who've accepted Puerto Rico's invitation to well-heeled U.S. citizens to move to the island and enjoy life without taxes on capital gains, an enticing offer for those whose income is derived from investments.

(AP Photo/Danica Coto)

invitation to well-heeled U.S. citizens to move to the island and enjoy life without taxes on capital gains, an enticing offer for those whose income is derived from investments.

Eiler lives in a gated community on Puerto Rico's southeastern shore, making a commute of less than 5 minutes from house to

cade and with an unemployment rate stuck above 13 percent, more than double the U.S. rate overall, it decided in 2012 to try to lure wealthy investors who would be likely to buy expensive real estate, establish businesses and create jobs.

Act 22, the legislation that set up the program, ex-

a technology investment strategist who moved from Vermont with his wife in December 2013.

Daley said he felt the U.S. mainland had become a more hostile tax environment under President Barack Obama. "They try to hold the people with the most mobility and the most wealth captive," Daley said



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on the terrace with alfresco dining or enjoy cuisine with dramatic views of the open-air kitchen. Guests enjoy fresh salads and appetizer plates, sampling endless sumptuous flavors before embarking on main dishes filled with 'build-your-own' omelets, heavenly combinations from their exotic pasta station, seafood, chicken, meat and vegetarian dishes and so much more - even delicious delights local to Aruba. You may



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Sisters Jacoba and Trijntje honored at the Amsterdam Manor



EAGLE BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring two very nice sisters whom are loyal and friendly visitors of Aruba, at the Amsterdam Manor, as Ambassadors of Goodwill. The symbolic honorary title

is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 20-or-more consecutive years. The honorees were Ms. Jacoba and Ms. Trijntje Balkema from the Netherlands. The sisters



Balkema have been visiting Aruba for 25 consecutive years and have always stayed at the Amsterdam Manor. They love Aruba very much, because of

the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants and they feel like they are at home here with their big Aruban family at the Amsterdam Manor. The

certificate was presented by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Mrs. Jürgen van Shaijk GM at the Amsterdam Manor. □

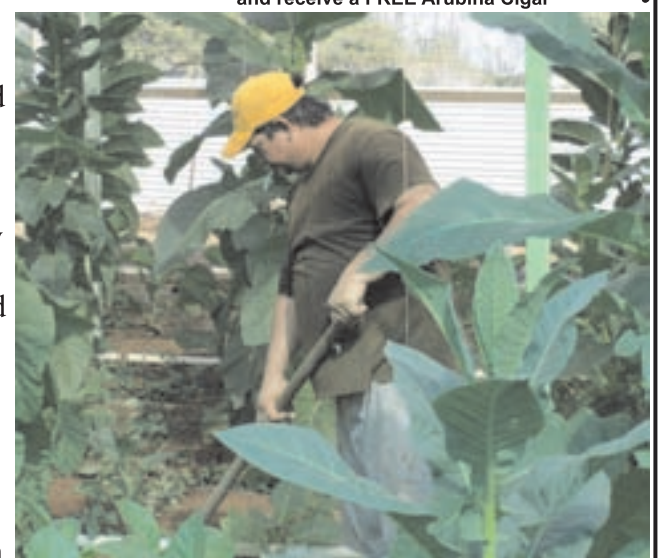
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ORANJESTAD- Benjamin Petrocchi, a true native Aruban started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced hand rolled cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi always had a interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crops. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba, he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The whole process took him 10 years to perfect. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the moulding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. Their handmade cigar box is specially designed with their "Aruhiba" logo. Petrocchi considers Aruhiba as a promotion for Aruba through its fine cigars. The company sells Aruhiba to the international markets as well. Visit their retail store located in front of the Historic Dutch Windmill in front of the RIO Hotel, with any purchase of \$20 and up you receive a free "Aruhiba" cigar or ask for their gift box of 5 cigars get 1 FREE for only \$37. They open from Monday to Saturday from 9 am till 6:30 pm and on Sundays from 10 am to 4 pm. Aruhiba cigars are now available at the gift stores in your resort and at well-known cigar stores. For their complete selection and attractive by the box prices visit their retail store. Tours are also



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Loyal Visitors honored at the Divi Phoenix Resort



PALM BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a group of loyal and friendly Visitors of Aruba, at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort, as Ambassadors of Goodwill. The symbolic honorary title is



presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 20-or-more consecutive years. The honorees were Mr. Floyd and Mrs. Janice Meekers from Union New



Jersey, and Mrs. Rosalyn Charnes, also from Union, New Jersey. All the honorees are loyal members of the Divi Phoenix and they love Aruba very much because of the friendly peo-

ple, the climate, beaches, restaurants, Casinos and Aruba feels like a second home, the people are like a family to them and the Divi Phoenix is their home away from home. The cer-

tificates were presented by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Ms. Pearl Lake and Mrs. Avril representing the Divi Phoenix. □

AMDC Law Launches All New, Revamped Website-www.amdclaw.com

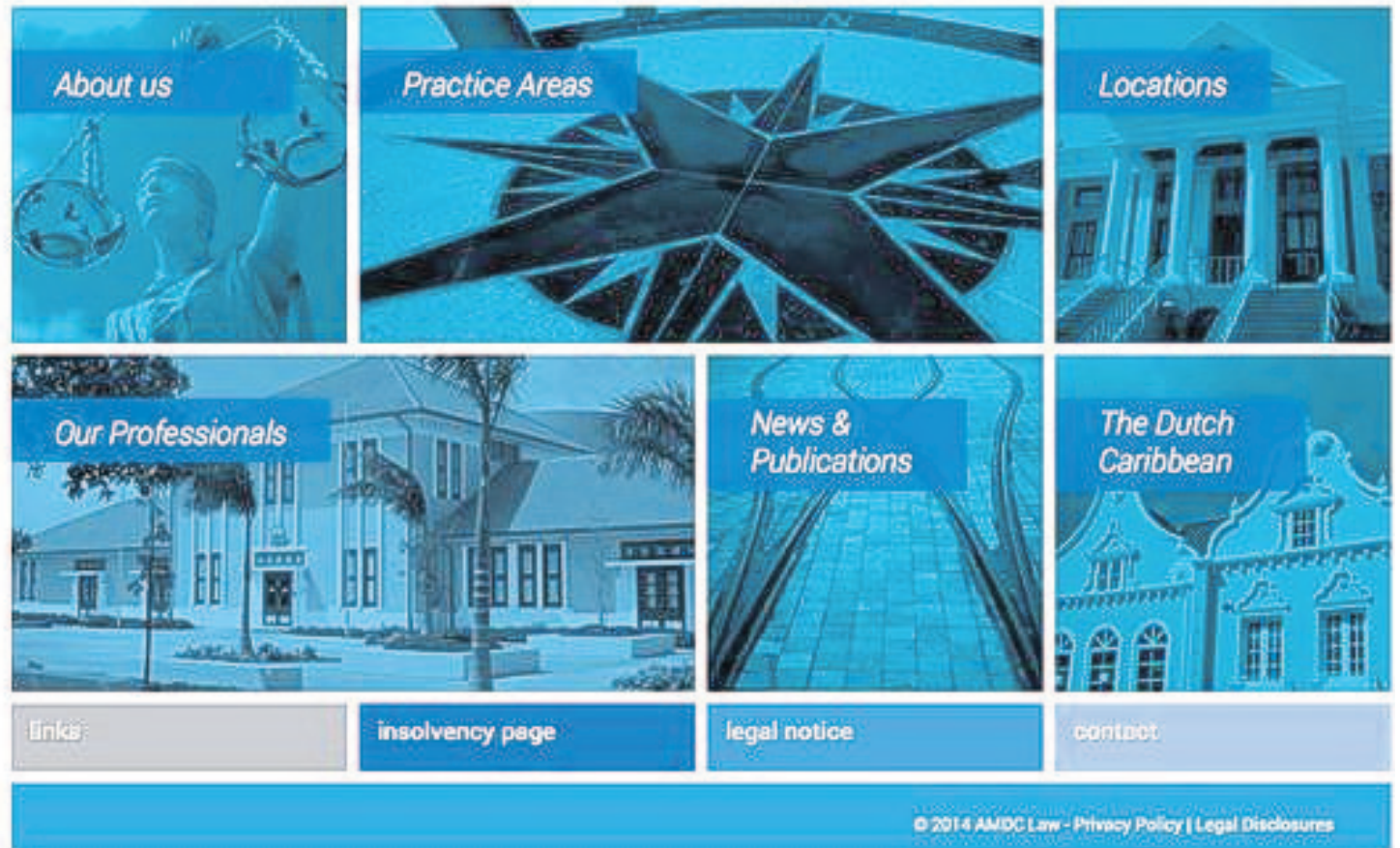
ORANJESTAD - AMDC Law has launched a completely revamped website. The redesigned site reflects AMDC Law's focus on high quality service and innovation. The site is designed to allow the visitors to discover the various legal services offered. One of the reasons for a redesign was to create a site that would provide broad information to the public in an efficient way. The site makes it easier for existing and potential clients to navigate and find information on the firm and its professionals.

The site also provides useful information on the countries and territories where AMDC Law is active in. Having a location in Aruba and Curaçao, AMDC Law lawyers are also active in St Maarten, Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba. Containing practical information on the professional services provided and applicable experience, the website is the perfect starting point when searching for practical and innovative legal solutions.

AMDC Law invites all to visit the renewed website at www.amdclaw.com. □



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Lincicome, Yoo top Bahamas LPGA Classic Leaderboard

PARADISE ISLAND, Bahamas (AP) — Brittany Lincicome and Sun Young Yoo topped the leaderboard Friday in the wind-swept Bahamas LPGA Classic when second-round play was suspended because of darkness.

In wind gusting to 35-40 mph, Yoo completed a first-round 70 and shot 69 in the second to match Lincicome at 7 under on Atlantis Resort's Ocean Club course.

"It was very tough, especially with the wind," Yoo said. "I just tried to stay focused and just tried to make the right putt with the wind."

Lincicome was 2 under in the second round with 13 holes left. She shot a 68 on Thursday.

"It was kind of just like hit-it-and-laugh kind of mentality," Lincicome said. "Like we weren't taking anything really seriously. We knew it was going to be blowing really strong and we're just thankful we didn't have to play all day. ... There was nothing we could do about it. It's so ridiculous out there that it's not even normal. It's kind of just you've got to laugh about it. You can't get mad."

After rain delayed play Thursday, only half of the players were able to finish the second round Friday. In May 2013, the inaugural event was reduced to three 12-hole rounds because of flooding.

Second-ranked Inbee Park, Dori Carter, Jenny Shin, Kelly Shon were 6 under. Shin and Shon shot 71, Carter had a 72, and Park was 1 under for the round with 13 holes left.

Continued on next page

SO A-MAZE-ING



Maze clinches women's downhill gold

Slovenia's Tina Maze reacts during the women's downhill at the Alpine skiing world championship in Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, in Beaver Creek, Colo.
Associated Press
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English leads as Mickelson and big names head home

DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Tiger Woods is gone from Torrey Pines, and Phil Mickelson joined him Friday by missing the cut.

In a tournament that quickly lost a big chunk of its star power, Harris English played another bogey-free round for a 6-under 66 on the North Course to build a two-shot lead Friday in the Farmers Insurance Open.

Mickelson, who worked hard to get into shape in the offseason and was as optimistic as ever, was done in by his short game. The best he could manage was a 72 on the North Course, and he missed the cut by two shots. It was the first time since 2002 that Mickelson missed the cut in back-to-back weeks on the PGA Tour.

Woods withdrew after 11 holes Thursday, citing tightness in his lower back. For the first time, Woods and Mickelson failed to make the cut in the same tournament in consecutive weeks on the PGA Tour.

"My putting is beyond pathetic," Mickelson said. "And if I can't get back to the levels of 2013, I'm not sure what I'm going to do. Because this is very frustrating."

Mickelson is not playing the last two weeks of the West Coast Swing because his kids are on spring break. He was in good company leaving early.



Harris English hits his tee shot on the 15th hole of the north course during the second round of the Farmers Insurance Open golf tournament Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, in San Diego.

Associated Press

Justin Rose, at No. 5 the highest-ranked player at Torrey Pines, also shot 70 on the North and missed the cut.

So did Hideki Matsuyama, who three-putted for par on the closing hole on the South Course to miss by one shot; Jordan Spieth, who needed an eagle on the 18th on the South to make the cut and hit it in the water; and Dustin Johnson, playing for the first time since a six-month break to get professional help for "personal challenges."

"The last two days, I think normally I probably would be at least 5 or 6 under right now instead of even

par," Johnson said. "But I'm happy with where it's at. Just a little rusty, that's all." Even those who are still around had a tough time, particularly Phoenix Open winner Brooks Koepka.

He reached the par-5 18th in two on the South Course and a two-putt birdie would have put him three shots out of the lead. Koepka missed his 6-foot birdie attempt, and then missed a pair of 2½-foot putts and wound up five-putting for double bogey. That gave him a 74 and he was six shots behind.

English was at 10-under 134, two shots ahead of Nick Watney (65), Jhonatan

Vegas (69) and Martin Laird, who had another 68. Laird was tied for the lead with two holes to play in Phoenix last week until a bogey-double bogey finish.

Most pleasing to English was a clean card going into the weekend. He was on the ropes early on Thursday he chipped through the green on the par-3 11th hole on the South and was facing certain bogey. But he chipped in for par, and he has only had a few close calls with bogey ever since.

English kept it simple on

the North by making three birdies on the par 5s. He two-putted twice, got up-and-down with a simple chip on the ninth hole and was poised to add another birdie on the par-5 18th until his 6-iron went long and into a tough lie. He chipped to 20 feet and two-putted for par.

Even so, it was another solid start to a tournament this year after going through some choppy play in 2014 that eventually led him to change swing coaches. English tied for third in the Sony Open, well behind a runaway by Jimmy Walker. "When you start struggling, it's easy to try to find stuff that's wrong with your game, wrong with your swing," he said. "I definitely was more swing-oriented than playing golf. That's not me."

That's not how I grew up playing the game. You're standing over shots thinking about swing positions instead of trying to see your ball flight and trying to play golf. That's what I was doing the latter half of the year, it was really frustrating."

Walker (66), Jason Day (65) and Ian Poulter (71) led a large group at 6-under 138. The cut was at 1-under 143. Still, nothing summed up the day — the entire week — than when Mickelson finished his round. □

LPGA

continued from page 17

"My caddie, after we hit our approach shot on the last hole, said, 'I'm not going to lie, this is the worst wind conditions I've ever seen,'" Carter said. "He told me on the last hole. He didn't say it middle of the round. But we laughed about that."

Lydia Ko, playing her first event since taking the No. 1 spot in the world ranking, was 3 under after rounds of 72 and 71. The 17-year-old New Zealander tied for second last week in the season-opening event in Florida, to break Tiger Woods' record as the youngest player to reach

No. 1.

Third-ranked Stacy Lewis was 2 under after rounds of 71 and 73.

Defending champion Jessica Korda was 1 over. She shot 73-74. Brooke Henderson was in danger of missing the cut in her first LPGA Tour start as a professional. After opening with a 75, the 17-year-old Canadian was 1 over — and 3 over overall — through five holes in the second round. She won a Suncoast Series event last week in Florida in her pro debut and earned a spot in the field Monday in the qualifying tournament.

Michelle Wie also struggled. She opened with a 76 and played the first five holes in the second round in 2 over to drop to 5 over. □

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NHL Capsules

Blues extend point streak to 13 with win over Sabres

The Associated Press

BUFFALO, New York (AP)

— Jake Allen stopped 23 shots and the St. Louis Blues set a franchise record by extending their points streak to 13 games with a 3-0 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night. Dmitrij Jaskin scored on a wraparound late in the second period, and Vladimir Tarasenko tapped in David Backes' pass in the third period for St. Louis, which improved its run to 12-0-1. Jaden Schwartz added an empty-netter. The Blues (34-13-4) won their seventh straight to match a season best, while beating the Sabres for the sixth straight time.

Buffalo (15-34-3) was shut out for the ninth time this season — one short of matching a franchise high. And the Sabres failed to build off the momentum of a 3-2 win at Montreal on Tuesday, when Buffalo snapped a team-worst 14-game skid.

ISLANDERS 3, FLYERS 2, SO
PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Cal Clutterbuck scored the deciding goal in the seventh round of the shootout. Clutterbuck also scored in regulation for the Islanders, as did Mikhail Grabovski. Frans Nielsen got a puck past Steve Mason on the first shot of the shootout, and Wayne Simmonds scored on Philadelphia's last tying attempt in the third round.

After Clutterbuck's wrist shot got past Mason, Sean Couturier was denied by Jaroslav Halak on the tying attempt and Philadelphia's season-high four-game winning streak was over. New York had lost three straight.

Nick Schultz and Chris VandeVelde scored in regulation for the Flyers.

PANTHERS 3, KINGS 2

SUNRISE, Fla. (AP) — Brandon Pirri scored with 3:05 remaining to lift the Panthers over the struggling Kings 3-2.

Nick Bjugstad and Aleksander Barkov also scored for the Panthers, and Roberto Luongo stopped 29



Philadelphia Flyers' Mark Streit (32), of Switzerland, collides with New York Islanders' Thomas Hickey (14) during the third period of an NHL hockey game, Thursday, Feb. 5, 2015, in Philadelphia. New York won 3-2 in a shootout.

shots.

Pirri grabbed a loose puck in the left circle and fired it past Jonathan Quick. He scored for the fourth consecutive game and the sixth in his past seven.

The Panthers have won their past two games and Luongo beat the Kings for the first time in nine games. Marian Gaborik and Jamie McBain scored for the Kings, and Quick made 17 saves. The Kings lost their third straight game and seventh in their past nine. Los Angeles has dropped nine of its past 11 road games, and remained tied for the fewest road wins in the NHL with Buffalo and Edmonton.

Capitals 3, Senators 2

OTTAWA (AP) — Alex Ovechkin scored the winning goal, Evgeny Kuznetsov also scored for the Capitals and Braden Holtby picked up his 25th win of the season by stopping 25 shots.

Kyle Turris scored the lone Ottawa goal, and Robin Lehner made 27 saves. Trailing 2-1 to start the third period, the Senators did their best to score the equalizer but couldn't find a way to beat Holtby.

Thursday's game was a milestone for defenseman Chris Phillips, who set the

franchise record by playing in his 1,179th game to surpass Daniel Alfredsson. Alfredsson and former teammate Wade Redden were on hand for the occasion.

DUCKS 5, PREDATORS 2
NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Jakob Silfverberg scored

two goals, and the Ducks took the top of the NHL standings for themselves. Anaheim and Nashville came in tied atop both the NHL and the Western Conference with 72 points, though the Predators have a game in hand. The teams

also have the league's winningest goalies with Pekka Rinne back in net for Nashville after missing three weeks with an injured knee. Frederik Andersen made 44 saves in tying Rinne with his 29th win.

Sami Vatanen and Matt Beleskey scored a goal each for Anaheim. The Ducks started a five-game road trip in dominating fashion even with center Ryan Getzlaf scratched after aggravating a lower-body injury in warmups. Colin Wilson and James Neal each scored in the third period for Nashville. But Corey Perry got an empty-netter with 1:19 remaining.

LIGHTNING 5, STARS 3

DALLAS (AP) — Tyler Johnson scored two third-period goals, lifting the Lightning. Johnson tipped Brian Boyle's shot from the top of the left faceoff circle down between goalie Kari Lehtonen's legs to break a 3-3 tie with 3:37 remaining. He'd put Tampa Bay ahead 3-2 with a power-play goal at 12:27. □

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Cavs cruise past Clippers to notch 12th straight win

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND (AP) — LeBron James scored 23 points, Kevin Love had 24 and the Cleveland Cavaliers pushed their winning streak to 12 games Thursday night with an easy 105-94 win over the Los Angeles Clippers, who also lost their composure.

The Cavs built a 32-point lead in the third quarter, allowing James and Love to sit out the fourth and rest. With their longest winning streak since a franchise-best 13-gamer in 2010, the Cavs moved into first place in the Central Division. Cleveland was seven games behind Chicago when the streak began with a victory over the Lakers on Jan. 15.

The Clippers were whistled for five technical fouls, including four in a contentious third quarter when they lost their California cool and forward Matt Barnes was ejected.

Blake Griffin scored 16 points for Los Angeles, whose subs made the score respectable in the fourth.

HORNETS 94, WIZARDS 87
CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Gerald Henderson scored 27 points and Charlotte defeated Washington for



Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James, left, drives to the basket against Los Angeles Clippers' Blake Griffin during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game Thursday, Feb. 5, 2015, in Cleveland.

Associated Press

the second time this week. Henderson was 10 of 15 from the field as the Hornets beat the Wizards for the fifth straight time. Charlotte won at Washington on Monday night, 92-88.

The Wizards have dropped five in a row overall.

Brian Roberts had 12 points and provided a huge spark late in the third quarter after Charlotte fell behind by 11. Lance Stephenson,

Michael Kidd-Gilchrist and Jason Maxiell added 11 points apiece for the Hornets (22-27).

Paul Pierce scored 19 for the Wizards. John Wall had 15 points and 13 assists.

Charlotte picked up its defense in the fourth quarter, holding the Wizards to 5-of-19 shooting.

Wizards guard Bradley Beal left in the first half with an injury to his right big toe and did not return. He had one point in 11 minutes.

MAVERICKS 101, KINGS 78

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— Monta Ellis had 21 points and six assists to lead Dallas, minus Dirk Nowitzki and Rajon Rondo, over struggling Sacramento.

The Mavericks broke open a tie game in the second quarter when they made nine straight shots, including four 3-pointers, in a 3½-minute span as they outscored the Kings 22-6. Dallas had a 37-20 edge in the second to take a 60-43 halftime lead.

Tyson Chandler had 16 points and 16 rebounds for the Mavericks. Devin Harris and J.J. Barea each scored 15 points, and Richard Jefferson added 14.

Dallas coach Rick Carlisle chose to rest Nowitzki on the second night of a back-to-back. Rondo (broken orbital bone) missed his third straight game.

DeMarcus Cousin had 23 points and 11 rebounds for the Kings, who have lost two straight and 10 of 11. Sacramento missed 18 of 21 attempts from 3-point territory and shot 36.7 percent overall.

TRAIL BLAZERS 108, SUNS 87

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)

— LaMarcus Aldridge had 19 points and 13 rebounds for his team-record 220th double-double in Portland's victory over Phoenix.

Nicolas Batum scored 20 points and Robin Lopez, playing his second game after missing 23 with a broken right hand, had 11 points and 12 rebounds for the Blazers, who won their second straight after a three-game skid.

Markieff Morris had 18 points for the Suns, who dropped their third in a row. Phoenix climbed back into the game in the third period after trailing by 19 in the first half, but ultimately the Blazers thwarted the rally with a dominant fourth quarter. □

Magic fire coach Jacque Vaughn after 2-plus seasons

KYLE HIGHTOWER

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Florida (AP) —

The Orlando Magic fired coach Jacque Vaughn after two and a half seasons on Thursday, ending the tenure of the first-time coach brought in to help rebuild the NBA team.

General manager Rob Hennigan announced the move, following a 15-37 start to the season and lopsided losses during a 10-game losing streak. It is the Magic's second skid of at least five games this year. Assistant James Borrego has been named interim coach.

Orlando was also 15-37 through 52 games last season. The 39-year-old Vaughn ends his Orlando tenure with a 58-158 overall record.

"We went into this season wanting to see some progress," Hennigan said. "We wanted to see growth. We just didn't feel like we were seeing the type of growth we wanted to see.

We're finding ourselves in sort of a rut ... but it's a road bump, not a road block."

Vaughn's dismissal comes after having the fourth-year option of his contract picked up by the team in this past offseason. □



In this Friday, Jan. 23, 2015, file photo, Orlando Magic coach Jacque Vaughn reacts during the third quarter of an NBA basketball game against the New York Knicks in New York.

Associated Press

Arum: Mayweather-Pacquiao TV issues resolved, others remain



In this Jan. 27, 2015 file photo, boxers Manny Pacquiao, left, and Floyd Mayweather Jr. watch the game between the Miami Heat and the Milwaukee Bucks during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Miami.

Associated Press

TIM DAHLBERG AP Boxing Writer

HBO and Showtime have agreed on how they would broadcast a fight between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao, promoter Bob Arum said on Thursday, leaving only two remaining issues to be settled before the much anticipated May 2 fight can be signed.

Arum told The Associated Press the rival networks have come to terms on an announcing team and other details for the pay-per-view blockbuster, and that talks this week have narrowed the remaining differences between the Mayweather and Pacquiao camps.

"We had four issues and we resolved two," said Arum, who promotes Pacquiao. "Now we're working on resolving the other two. Unless something else comes up at the last minute, that's what my take is."

Not so fast, said Stephen Espinoza, executive vice president for Showtime

Sports. "There are a few significant issues remaining on both the fighter side and the network side of this deal," Espinoza said. "While we are optimistic, it's a bit premature to say that the networks are in total agreement."

Arum declined to say what those two issues were, saying he didn't want to sabotage the negotiations just as they were reaching a critical juncture. And it was not clear whether the Mayweather side views the negotiations the same as Arum, or even if Mayweather will agree to the fight. Mayweather's adviser is Al Haymon, who reportedly has been doing the negotiating on his fighter's behalf. But Haymon doesn't talk to the media, and Mayweather communicates almost exclusively through social media.

Mayweather's latest postings showed him enjoying a trip on a private jet to the Caribbean and getting a fish pedicure. He did post on social media last week

that a media report the fight was a done deal was a "lie."

Arum said the major financial points of the fight have been agreed to, including a reported 60-40 split in the purse in Mayweather's favor. Based on the fight doing a record \$200 million or more in revenue, Mayweather's payday could be at least \$120 million.

"There's a lot of devil in the details and that's what we're sorting through now," Arum said. "The remaining issues are obviously important to the participants, and are things we have to work out."

Mayweather's representatives have dictated most of the terms of the fight, and Arum said Mayweather will be the one to announce it if it is made.

Mayweather fights under contract to Showtime, and Pacquiao to HBO, and there was speculation the networks could hold up the fight by not coming to terms themselves. But talks between top executives have been ongoing for weeks, and HBO issued a statement on Monday saying it was not an "impediment" to the fight.

An HBO spokesman declined comment on Thurs-

day, and Showtime executives were not immediately made available for comment.

While Mayweather has been vacationing, Pacquiao was heading home on Thursday to the Philippines after a trip to the U.S. and England. While in Miami for the pageant, Pacquiao attended a Miami Heat basketball game the same night Mayweather was there, and the fighters

exchanged numbers and discussed the fight.

They later met for an hour, and Arum said the meeting convinced him that Mayweather wanted to make the fight.

Before heading home, Pacquiao also met in Washington with Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid and on Thursday attended the National Prayer Breakfast, where President Barack Obama spoke. □



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Maze takes gold in downhill at worlds; Vonn struggles to 5th

PAT GRAHAM

AP Sports Writer

BEAVER CREEK, Colo. (AP)

— Tina Maze is making herself right at home on what was supposed to be Lindsey Vonn's hill. Anna Fenninger, too.

A good start to the world championships for them. Not so for the Americans.

Maze captured the women's downhill gold medal Friday ahead of the pre-race favorite Vonn, who struggled on a warm day and in an event during which she usually shines.

On a twisty course that Maze navigated to near perfection, the Slovenian standout finished in 1 minute, 45.89 seconds to beat Fenninger of Austria by 0.02 seconds. Lara Gut of Switzerland earned bronze.

This result was the reverse of the super-G race, when Fenninger won and Maze was runner-up. Maze has a chance to medal in every event at worlds.

Now that would put her in some pretty elite company.

At the 1999 worlds in Beaver Creek, Lasse Kjus of Norway captured five medals (two golds, three silvers). It's a taxing ambition and not many skiers attempt this sort of feat.

"I know I can do this. I knew that before I came here," Maze said. "Of course, it's



Slovenia's Tina Maze races during the women's downhill at the Alpine skiing world championship in Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, in Beaver Creek, Colo.

Associated Press

in my mind, but thinking about it makes no sense. You have to go day by day, from discipline to discipline. I know I can get it." She's confident. The American team? Perhaps not quite as much.

The squad was dealt a blow Thursday when Bode Miller crashed in the super-G and deeply cut his leg. He had surgery to fix his severed right hamstring tendon later that night and his world championships are now done.

With pressure on her shoul-

ders — skiing in front of a hometown crowd, this being her signature event — Vonn couldn't find her rhythm and didn't get on the podium. She was off to a fast start up top, much to the delight of the capacity crowd. But she faded in the curvy middle section and wound up fifth.

"Honestly, I did the best I could," said Vonn, who won a bronze in the super-G, the only medal the Americans have through three races. "I fought the whole way down. I was so

focused. I visualized the course a thousand times. It just wasn't a great run. It was a good run, but not a top-five worthy run."

Vonn's world championships aren't over, though. She said she will compete in the giant slalom and the Alpine combined, which meshes the times of a slalom run and a downhill run. Racing No. 16, Fenninger had a clean run and jumped into the lead. Her teammate, Elisabeth Goergl, couldn't catch her. Neither could Gut.

Then along came Maze, who glided just a little better in the flatter sections and took over the lead by the slimmest of margins. She pumped her ski poles and stuck out her tongue in exultation soon after finishing.

Maze held her breath with Vonn going next, but the 30-year-old Vonn scuffled in the technical sections of the course and couldn't make up for it on the gliding portion near the bottom.

It was Maze's first world championship downhill title. At 31 years old, she's now the oldest female skier to win a world title.

Her secret on a difficult course?

"I became friends with this slope," Maze said.

And Fenninger. After all they meet all the time — on the podium.

"We are sharing our wins and good races. That's why we are good friends," Fenninger said.

They'll meet again in the Alpine combined and GS. Fenninger is ready.

"Today, it was so close to the win. Today, Tina was better," Fenninger said.

"She had a really good run. I'm really happy that I can take the silver medal. In the downhill it was always so difficult for me, but today it was perfect." □



In this photo provided by Remaphoto, United States' Bode Miller crashes during the men's super-G competition at the alpine skiing world championships, Thursday, Feb. 5, 2015, in Beaver Creek, Colo. Miller did not finish the

Associated Press

PAT GRAHAM

AP Sports Writer

BEAVER CREEK, Colo. (AP)

— Bode Miller said if his crash at the world championships was indeed his last race he's all right with that because his career has

been "an amazing ride."

In his first interview since surgery on his severed right hamstring tendon, Miller told The Associated Press on Friday he is still deciding whether to return next season. The 37-year-old

Bode Miller: Return unclear after crash at worlds

skier and his wife have a baby due in May, and Miller doesn't want to race if he "can't commit the time and energy to get the preparation done."

"The preparation is pretty demanding, requires summers and requires unbelievable commitment to fitness and the dry-land program," he added. "That's just really hard to juggle with my priorities right now. I love racing. But I just don't know."

The six-time Olympic medalist sustained a deep cut when his ski sliced him in the crash during the super-G.

Another cut inside severed the tendon. He tried to get doctors to sew up only the outside — and deal with the tendon later — so he could race Saturday in the downhill.

"If I was tougher than I am, I probably could've had them sew the thing up and leave the hamstring tendon completely cut," Miller said.

Hard to question his toughness. Miller has made a living out of recovering from big crashes and injuries. He had back surgery in November, but returned in time to race at the worlds,

his goal all along.

Miller was skiing well Thursday and in the lead and already looking toward the next gate. That's when the one he was passing proved troublesome.

"The gate just didn't break away," said Miller, who's from Franconia, New Hampshire. "It really stuck on my arm and just jerked me down. It was so quick. I had no chance to make a recovery."

He skied down to the finish, waved to the crowd, hugged his family and then went to the hospital for surgery. □

Facebook, LinkedIn join to help women in tech

MARTHA MENDOZA

AP National Writer

MENLO PARK, Calif. (AP) —

Facebook and LinkedIn want to boost dwindling numbers of women studying engineering and computer science with a collaborative initiative announced Friday that they hope will eventually fill thousands of lucrative Silicon Valley jobs long dominated by men.

In an exclusive joint interview with The Associated Press, Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg and LinkedIn CEO Jeffrey Weiner said they're launching mentoring and support programs at colleges to get more women involved in studying technology in general, but also as future employees for their companies.

Fifteen percent of Facebook Inc.'s employees working in tech jobs and 31 percent of all employees are women, according to diversity figures the company released last year. At LinkedIn Corp., women comprise 17 percent of its tech employees and 39 percent of employees overall. Most Silicon Valley companies have similar demographics.

Telle Whitney, president and CEO of the Anita Borg Institute, which is a partner in the initiative, said diversity brings greater innovation in technology.

"Think about it," Whitney said. "If everybody who creates a product looks the same, you know the results won't be nearly as interesting. We want for the sake of our future to have women involved in all the projects that will change our lives."

Sandberg launched an international conversation about the dearth of women in positions of power with her 2011 book "Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead." She has pressed to bring about change through her nonprofit LeanIn.org, which will

provide a platform for the support groups.

"A lot of our consumers, at least half, sometimes more, are women. We build a product that gives people a voice. We know we can't build a product for the world unless our teams reflect the diversity of the people who use the product," she said.

But the talent pool is shrinking: The percentage of people enrolled in undergraduate computer science programs who are women peaked at 35 percent in 1985 and is now down to about 17 percent.

Weiner said LinkedIn needs gender equity to better serve users.

"To limit the perspective of the people building our product and services, if that's too narrow, it's going to lead to suboptimal outcomes," Weiner said.

The executives would not disclose how much of a financial commitment they are making, but the investment is different in that it's more focused on peer groups and a mentoring process already established through Lean In Circles. They hope it will go global, with groups at public and private universities.

Stanford University computer science student Lea Coligado, 21, said she and her female colleagues could use the support and mentorship.

"There's so few of us, so we definitely stick together," she said. "I think there's a stereotype. It's understated and people don't want to say it out loud, but it's there — the idea that women are just not very good at computer science — and some use that to justify why our numbers are so low. It's flabbergasting."

Coligado is not only good at programming, she loves it.

"Programming teaches me a very distinct way of thinking," she said. "If I have a problem, I break



In this photo taken Tuesday Feb. 3, 2015, Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg answers questions during an interview at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif.

Associated Press

it into chunks and conquer it."

Paige Rogalski, a senior at Santa Clara University studying computer engineering, said she saw the already scarce number of girls in her program leave in their first year.

"I think it was because of the intimidation factor,"

she said. "Computer science has been a male-dominated field."

She said that while she's been mentored and largely supported, she also hears sexist comments and jokes, and was once told that her appearance was a factor in why she was hired.

"It still bothers me that

as a woman I have to overcome prejudice and the sexualized view of women in order to be taken completely seriously," she said. "On the other hand, this comment has pushed me to work harder and have my effort and my work stand out and be what I'm known for." □

Uber to introduce 'panic button' safety feature in India



In this Monday, Dec. 8, 2014 file photo, 32-year-old Shiv Kumar Yadav, center, a driver from the international taxi-booking service Uber, is escorted by police to be produced to a court in New Delhi, India.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Uber says it's introducing two new safety features for riders in India in response to concerns about safety that followed a passen-

ger reporting she had been raped by a driver.

The San Francisco taxi alternative company says it will launch a "panic button" in its ride-hailing app that allows riders to notify the police in case of an emergency, and a "safety net" feature that will allow users to share trip details and their location with as many as five other people.

Uber says it is also creating a local team that will respond to reports by riders and will get a notification when the panic button is pressed.

The company says the new features will be available Wednesday. Uber did not say if the new features will be available in other countries, but said in an email that it will have more updates in

the coming months.

Uber, valued at \$40 billion, lets passengers summon cars through an app in more than 250 cities around the world. It faces multiples legal and regulatory challenges as it expands in the United States and abroad.

An Uber passenger said she was raped by a driver in New Delhi in December, and she sued the company in January. The lawsuit alleges Uber isn't doing enough to keep passengers safe, and Uber may also face charges if Indian prosecutors believe it misrepresented the safety of its services.

The company says it plans to improve its safety programs in 2015 and is looking for new ways to screen drivers. □

Germany's Siemens to slash 7,800 jobs worldwide

JACK EWING

© 2015 New York Times

FRANKFURT, Germany - Siemens, one of Germany's flagship industrial companies, said Friday that it planned to cut 7,800 jobs, or 2.3 percent of its workforce worldwide, as it eliminates layers of management in an attempt to become as

profitable as its main competitors.

About 3,300 of the job cuts will be in Germany. Overall, the company's staffing levels will remain stable worldwide, it said, because Siemens will invest about 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) in improving its sales force and in research and de-

velopment. Siemens has about 340,000 employees worldwide, including 46,000 in the United States and Puerto Rico. Joe Kaeser, the Siemens chief executive, had signaled last week that job cuts were likely after the company reported a 25 percent fall in net profit in the last quarter of 2014.

The job cuts are part of a broader reorganization, announced last year, which included reducing the number of its main business units to 10 from 16. Siemens has often faced criticism for being too bureaucratic and slow-moving.

Siemens, a major supplier of equipment to the en-

ergy industry, has been hit by reduced demand from oil producers after a plunge in oil and gasoline prices. Siemens also makes high-speed trains and other equipment for public transportation, as well as medical scanners and automation equipment for factories. □

Safe-play stocks, bonds and gold sink after US hiring surge

KEN SWEET

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Safety" wasn't safe Friday.

A blockbuster U.S. jobs report sent investors fleeing their traditional places of comfort: dividend-paying

Street as a "flight to safety." Instead, it was a flight from safety Friday as investors grew more confident that the economy would grow. "The January employment report was strong across the board," said Michelle

year Treasury jumped to 1.95 percent from 1.81 percent as investors sold off the ultra-safe investment. Utility stocks, one of the best-performing parts of the market over the last year, took a beating. The

startled investors with evidence that the job market is closer to full health. U.S. employers added 257,000 jobs last month and wages jumped by the most in six years. The gains were far better than expected.

The Dow Jones industrial average fell 60.59 points, or 0.3 percent, to 17,824.29. The Standard & Poor's 500 index lost 7.05 points, or 0.3 percent, to 2,055.47 and the Nasdaq composite fell 20.70 points, or 0.4 percent, to 4,744.40.

Understanding why a strong jobs report could push the stock market lower requires some counterintuitive thinking.

Unlike their counterparts in Europe and Asia, who are lowering interest rates, U.S. central bankers could lift rates as soon as June. Strategists say the surprisingly robust jobs report gives the Fed more ammunition to justify a rate increase sooner rather than later.

"There's an underlying nervousness in this market built on cheap money," said Russ Koesterich, global chief investment strategist at BlackRock.

The current near-zero interest rates have been a key factor driving the stock

market's dramatic rise since March 2009. By keeping rates low, the Fed has made bonds appear more expensive than stocks. If interest rates rise, a richly-priced stock market would tend to be less attractive to investors, strategists say.

That dynamic was reflected in utility stocks Friday. Utilities typically pay investors consistently high dividends and tend to fluctuate less than other stocks, giving them a bond-like quality. That makes them appealing to investors seeking income and less risk.

"It's much more difficult to justify these high prices for utility stocks with yields rising like this," Koesterich said.

Despite Friday's downturn, it was a good week overall for investors. The Dow ended up 3.8 percent and the S&P 500 climbed 3 percent. Stocks have now reclaimed the ground they lost in January.

The price of oil also rebounded this week on signs that crude production is slowing. U.S. crude jumped 7 percent, its biggest gain since February 2011, during the Arab Spring and turmoil in Libya. □



Trader Tommy Kalikas, center, works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. A blockbuster U.S. jobs report sent investors fleeing their traditional places of comfort: dividend-paying stocks, as well as bonds and gold. The selling left major indexes slightly lower.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

stocks, as well as bonds and gold. The selling left major indexes slightly lower. When nervous investors crowd into safe-haven assets, it's known on Wall

Girard, an economy at RBS Securities, in a note to clients. "The data were clearly very healthy."

Gold fell more than 2 percent. The yield on the 10-

Dow Jones utility index, a collection of 15 power companies, had its worst day since August 2011, plunging 4 percent.

January's jobs report

Twitter's revenue grows despite more user stagnation

MIKE ISAAC

© 2015 New York Times

Twitter just can't seem to catch a break.

Critics have panned the company's slowing user growth. It has churned through the hiring and firing of top managers. Recently, investors have started to wonder if Dick Costolo, Twitter's chief executive, is the right man for

the job.

Now it looks as if 2015 is off to a rocky start.

Late Thursday, the company reported its fourth-quarter earnings, saying it had 288 million regular users on its platform at the end of 2014, an addition of only 4 million people from the previous quarter and roughly one-fifth the number who visit Facebook on

a monthly basis. This is a significant miss from analysts' expectations of about 291 million regular users, and far less growth than the company has had in previous quarters.

That lag in new users is just a pit stop for Twitter, Costolo said in a news release; he expects user growth numbers to bounce back by the end of the first quar-

ter, according to early internal results.

The earnings report held some good news for the 8-year-old micromessaging service, which since its initial public offering in 2013 has been playing defense against shareholders who expect blockbuster results akin to Facebook, a far larger social media service. Twitter said it had

revenue of \$479 million in the fourth quarter, up 97 percent compared with \$243 million a year ago, and easily surpassing analyst expectations of \$453 million.

The company reported a loss of \$125 million, or 20 cents a share, up from a loss of \$500 million, or \$1.41 a share, in the fourth quarter a year ago. □

Your Money Adviser: Subprime borrowers mostly lured by high-fee credit cards

ANN CARRNS

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Unsolicited credit card offers can sound especially appealing to people with blemished credit, or a sparse borrowing history, since they lack alternatives. But cards targeting subprime consumers - those with low credit scores - can get these borrowers into deeper trouble.

So-called fee harvester cards offer very low credit limits, but also charge high upfront fees that not only eat up the available credit but also effectively increase the interest rate on the card.

On Wednesday, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau ordered one such company, Continental Finance, to refund \$2.7 million to about 98,000 customers who were charged illegal fees. The agency also ordered the company to pay a civil penalty of \$250,000, according to a consent order signed by Richard Cordray, the agency's director.

Cordray said in a statement that the excessive fees were "especially harmful because the cards were targeted to consumers with subprime credit who are often economically vulnerable."

Representatives of Continental, based in Delaware, did not return a call seeking comment. The company works with banks and credit unions to issue the cards. The consumer bureau found that Continental violated the 2009 Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act, known as the CARD Act, which in part bans card companies from charging customers fees in excess of 25 percent of the card's credit limit during the first year after an account is opened. The violations occurred between April 2012 and July 2013.

Continental's cards marketed under the names Cerulean, Matrix and Verve typically offered a \$300 credit limit. But consumers were immediately charged a \$75 upfront fee, which met the limit under the CARD Act. Then, the bureau found, the company charged further fees over the course of the following 12 months that exceeded the fee cap.

The fees included a \$4.95 monthly charge for paper billing statements; consumers were led to believe they would be charged the fee only if they elected to have paper billing, but in fact they were charged it automatically unless they opted out, the agency said.

The case is relatively small - the settlement works out to about \$28 per customer - but it highlights the tricks and traps vulnerable consumers can face when trying to access credit, said Lauren Saunders, a lawyer with the National Consumer Law Center.

In a report on fee harvester cards, the law center noted that the fees such cards typically charged left consumers with scant credit to use. In one example cited in the report, a credit card company offered a card with a \$250 credit limit, which was reduced to \$72 after deducting a \$95 program fee, a \$29 setup fee, a \$6-a-month participation fee and an annual fee of \$48.

"Look really carefully at the fees" attached to any card offer, particularly if you have marginal credit, Saunders said. Here are some questions about fee-harvester cards:

-Q. If I have poor credit, are there any alternatives to high-fee cards? -A. You can ask your bank or credit union about secured credit cards. With a secured card, you make a deposit with the bank, then borrow against it. The bank reports your repayment history to the credit bureaus, which helps to build your credit file. The drawback, Saunders notes, is that you have to have the funds upfront for the deposit. □

As trading pits close, Wall Street traders yearn for 'roar' of old

B. CONDON

J. FUNK

AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — When Marc Schwartz heard that many of America's last trading pits were closing down, the veteran commodities trader was hardly surprised. He spent 17 years yelling in the New York pits, but gave it up, like so many colleagues before him, to work in an office. Still, he felt a blow and a pang of nostalgia when he heard the news.

floor every day.

Blame technology. Faster, cheaper, computers have taken over the process of establishing prices on everything from Exxon Mobil shares on stock exchanges, to hogs and cattle on commodity exchanges. Floortrading has shrunk to a fraction of its volume from two decades ago. In total, 2.8 billion futures were traded on CME exchanges last year, but nearly all electronically. Only 31 million futures changed hands

To many, the romance of the pits was best captured in "Trading Places," the 1983 film starring Dan Aykroyd and Eddie Murphy. In one scene, before entering the pit, Aykroyd famously declares, "Well, this is it, the last bastion of pure capitalism left on earth."

Schwartz, the Chicago trader, recalled the line with a chuckle, adding his own color about the place: "It didn't matter who you were, what your education, everyone was equal in



In this May 6, 2010 photo, traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on a day when the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped about 1,000 points, in New York. Computers were blamed for the so-called "Flash Crash" that sent stocks plummeting in minutes and botched initial public offering of Facebook stock. (AP Photo/Henny Ray Abrams)

"I liked the energy, I liked the roar," said Schwartz, 45, as he sat before a bank of six computer screens in an office at DV Trading in Chicago. "There is no more roar."

Traders are calling it an "end of an era" after news late Wednesday that CME Group, the parent company of the Chicago Board of Trade and other exchanges, is shutting down most trading in its 21 pits in Chicago and New York. Those sites are where people establish prices by flashing hand signals and shouting at each other on a trading floor.

But that shoulder-to-shoulder tussle is coming to an end with a whimper, not a bang. Futures traders and clerks in CME pits have dwindled to about 475, and many of them work remotely using computers and don't come to the

on trading floors — 1 percent of the total.

Jim Bower, a 40-year trading veteran, calls the current computerized environment "austere," and misses the verbal cues that helped him sense where prices were headed. "I could tell whether the market was bullish or bearish just by the tone in the pits," he said. "It's not as much fun as it used to be."

But the global nature of markets today, combined with the information flooding traders every second, makes technology necessary, he said.

"The market is essentially moving around the clock around the world at breakneck speed," said Bower, 65, president of Bowers Trading, a commodities brokerage in Lafayette, Indiana. "You have to have the technology to keep up with it."

the pit."

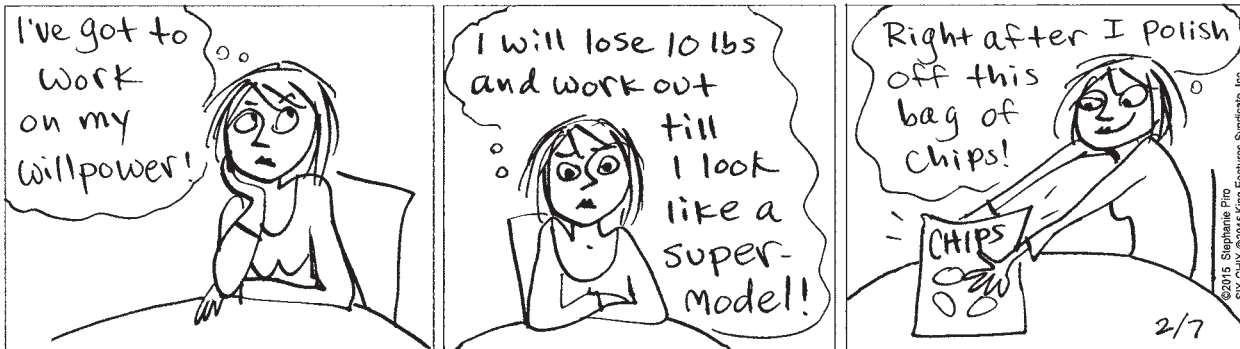
For all the technological progress since, it can help to have a human around. In the Flash Crash of 2010, an algorithm gone wrong caused the Dow Jones industrial average to fall 600 points in less than five minutes. And Facebook's initial public offering in 2012 was beset by technical difficulties on the Nasdaq Stock Market, which unlike the New York Stock Exchange does not use human intermediaries. The Nasdaq had to pay \$10 million in fines for the computer failures.

When Twitter decided to go public the next year, it was said the social media company chose the NYSE to avoid a Facebook-like debacle. Its first day of trading went off without a hitch, a rare moment of glory for the iconic trading floor, which is sleepy most days. □

Mutts



6 Chix



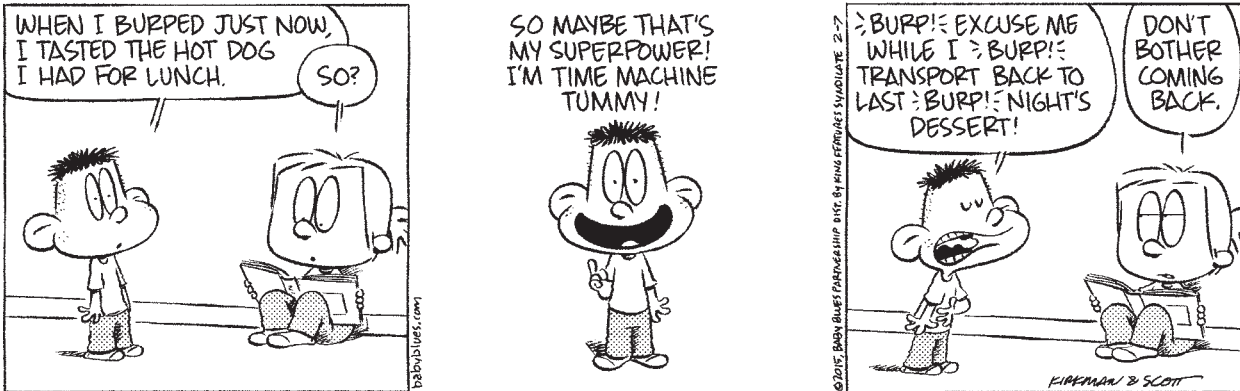
Blondie



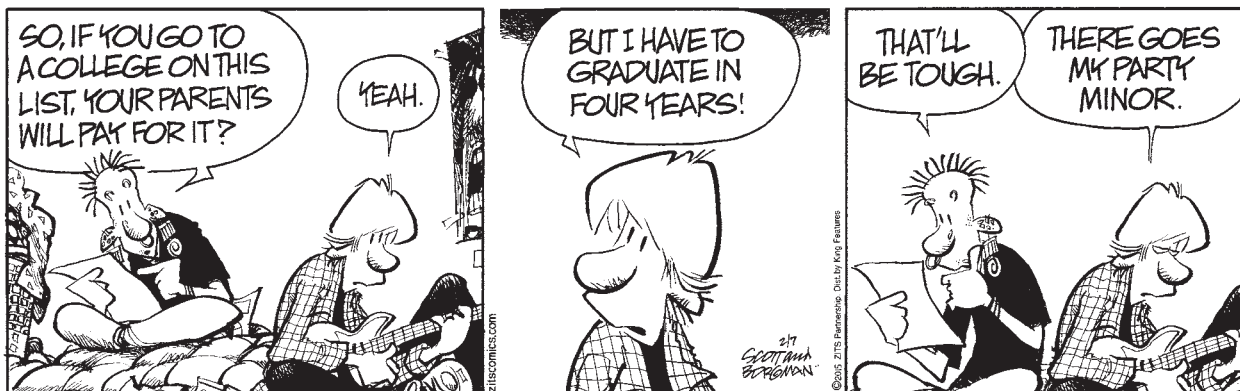
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

8			2			3	6
1		9		4			
						2	
	4		5	7			3
3			6	2		7	
	6						
			4		2		8
5	7			8			1

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

2/07

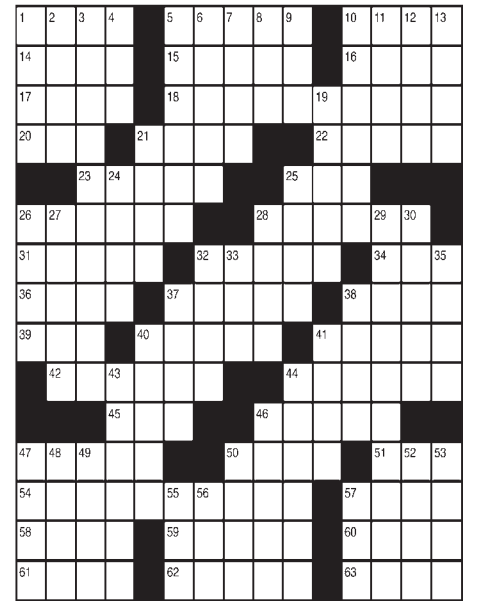
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

8	2	3	9	4	5	7	1	6
6	4	9	2	7	1	5	8	3
5	7	1	3	8	6	2	4	9
1	3	6	5	9	2	4	7	8
4	9	2	7	1	8	3	6	5
7	8	5	6	3	4	1	9	2
3	6	8	4	2	7	9	5	1
2	5	4	1	6	9	8	3	7
9	1	7	8	5	3	6	2	4

ACROSS

- Casino game
- "Casey _ Bat"
- Failure; disaster
- _ tea; summer refresher
- "Don't _ on me"; words on an old flag
- Dubque, _
- Get rid of
- Very stubborn
- Lay a lawn
- Majors and Marvin
- Dishwasher cycle
- Detroit team
- VP Quayle
- Perfumes
- Smart
- At all _; by any means necessary
- Brown ermine
- Upper limb
- Besides
- Street talk
- _ market; swap meet
- Singer _ Tillis
- _ in; substitute
- Couches
- Respiratory or circulatory
- Distance from end to end
- Actor _
- Cruise
- Vital artery
- Up and about
- Snatch
- JFK's successor
- Like a watch able to endure being dropped
- Sticky stuff
- Eccentric one
- Silly as a _
- Harbor town
- _ up; arranges
- Puff _; deadly reptile
- Blyth and Jillian



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

2/7/15

Friday's Puzzle Solved

DOWN

- Smooch
- Resound
- To no purpose
- Unusual
- Greek capital
- Joyce Kilmer's famous poem
- Soothing drinks
- "I've _ it!"; cry of disgust
- Ames & Asner
- Canning an employee
- Diving bird
- Possesses
- Leaf of a book
- Characteristic
- Plenty
- 24 4 _ 12 is 3
- Boring event
- Con game
- Nat and Natalie
- James _; 007
- Two quarts
- Actor Williams
- Close angrily
- Light brown
- Aida's sitcom

JRS	SIGHS	SODA
OILS	CROOK	AVID
BLIP	RABBI	MEND
EDUCATION	ONES	
TAPE	NBA	
STINGS	ALIENATE	
ERNIE	TWEED	PEN
LANK	CHAIR	CHAT
LIE	PIERS	BOISE
STRAINED	READER	
DEN	POTS	
ALSO	ACROBATIC	
LEAN	MAORI	ECHO
MAGI	OFTEN	REAL
SPAS	NEEDS	DDE

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2/7/15

- Flower stalk
- Letter style on a computer
- Baby carrier?
- Many a Kosovo native
- Adheres
- Slip-on shoe
- Got up
- Inquires
- Oxford or clog
- Sound the horn
- "_ grief!"
- Scorch
- Fast planes
- Golfers' assn.
- Curtain holder
- Student's avg.

Big fish

Continued from page 8

When he started the event, Haberman said, he never contacted USA Hockey officials, who, unbeknown to him, had the same idea.

Don Kohlman, an influential figure in Wisconsin amateur hockey, learned of USA Hockey's interest in a pond hockey tournament and pitched Dollar Lake in Eagle River as a site. The tournament grew from 40 teams and 240 players in the first year to 330 teams and 2,300 players for this year's event, which begins Friday. But poor ice conditions on Dollar Lake forced the tournament to be played on a dry-land site for the first time, said the Eagle River Area fire chief, Pat Weber, the local liaison. Outdoor rinks were constructed at a local track, which normally hosts snowmobile races.

On or off the water, U.S. pond hockey rules differ greatly from rules in college hockey and the NHL. Teams skate four on four, with no goaltenders and a maximum of six or seven players on a roster. Games have two 15-minute halves with a two-minute break in between. Checking and slap shots are not allowed. There is no icing or offsides. Goals may be scored only from the attacking half of the ice.

Nets vary from tournament to tournament. Minnesota uses wooden boxes made of 2-by-6-inch planks that are 6 feet wide with 12-inch openings on each end. Wisconsin opts for nets, which are 4 feet wide and 6 inches high. Minnesota edges its rinks with 18 inches of hard plastic, but Eagle River prefers small piles of snow. Every spring, Weber said, firefighters retrieve 700 to 800 pucks from the melting snowbanks and donate them to the local hockey association.

Pond hockey also stands out for the whimsical team names etched on its trophies. Minnesota entries included Hat Trick Swayze; He Suits, He Scores, with

players in tuxedo T-shirts; Navin R Johnson and the Jerks, a reference to the 1979 film starring Steve Martin; and Vanek! At the Disco, melding Minnesota Wild forward Thomas Vanek with a pop punk band.



The Beerhawks, a co-ed team from Tampa, Fla., play at the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships, on Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis, Jan. 16, 2015. Once just a curiosity in the United States, pond hockey has twice as many players as a decade ago, and not one but two rival championships. (Angela Jimenez/The New York Times)

Surge Cycling/Red Army, a team of former Division III players that was known for its Russian-lettered uniforms until it picked up a sponsor this year, won the open division of the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships, defeating Old No. 7, 11-7.

The thought of one grand championship intrigued the Surge Cycling captain, Jim Fritz, who played at St. John's in Collegeville, Minnesota. But Fritz, 43, the vice president of a receivables company, said, "I don't want to travel any farther than this."

Two of Fritz's teammates, Josh Edwards and Steve Mulke, voiced concerns about expenses because USA Hockey will not offer prize money. "I don't know if it's worth it," Mulke said. Neither does Weber, from

the Wisconsin tournament. "Then it almost comes down to putting us in a position to compete with the others," he said.

"I don't want to do that. You might want to throw caution to the wind and try to outdo each other. "There are people who come here every year for the camaraderie. They've developed pretty good friendships with teams in their divisions. Hockey takes second for the people who want to be here." No need to declare a champion for that. □

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February 8

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24/7

1, 2, 3 octopuses: Divers conduct underwater census

By MANUEL VALDES
Associated Press

PUGET SOUND, Wash. (AP)

-- To check on the health of the giant Pacific octopus population in Puget Sound, an unusual census takes place every year. Volunteer divers, enlisted by the Seattle Aquarium, take to Washington's inland waters to look for their eight-tentacle neighbors. THE BIGGEST IN THE WORLD Weighing as much as 150 pounds with tentacles that can span up to 20 feet, the giant Pacific octopus lives up to its name. It's the biggest octopus in the world, and it calls the waters off Seattle home, part of its vast range over the Pacific Ocean.

"The Puget Sound offers good habitat, water temperature and an abundant food source for them," said Kathryn Kegel, a Seattle Aquarium biologist.

Known as one of the smartest creatures in the sea, the giant Pacific octopus leads a relatively short life, between three and five years. They are terminal maters, meaning once they mate, they die soon after.

"They are big hunters of crab, clams, scallops, things like that," Kegel said. Because the giant Pacific octopus is not on federal endangered- or threatened-species lists, there are no current studies on the Puget Sound population. In fact, it's unknown how many live in the area, Kegel said.

That's where the Seattle Aquarium and its troops of volunteer divers step in.

AN INFORMAL BUT INFORMATIVE CENSUS

From the waters off Seattle to the maritime border with Canada, 27 divers looked for the giant Pacific octopus, or G.P.O. as it's called, at 11 sites around Puget



In this still Oct. 5, 2014 image taken from video provided by Andrea Petersen, a giant Pacific octopus swims at the bottom of the Puget Sound near Edmonds, Wash.

Associated Press

Sound last month. The aquarium asked the divers to count how many octopuses they saw, note the depth of their finding and the type of hiding spot.

This year, the census counted 28 octopuses, while divers found 17 last year.

"We've been watching the numbers go up, then kind of go down, then kind of go back up," Kegel said.

"That could be having to do with population and mating. As they all peak and mate, they slowly die off, then they start to grow back up again."

The volunteer nature of the census means the count is not rigidly scientific, she said.

Two years ago, after a diver killed an octopus, state wildlife officials changed

the rules to carve out protected habitat for octopuses. They used the data from the census as well as information from the dive community.

DIVING COMMUNITY

Puget Sound hosts a healthy scuba diving community, and the giant Pacific octopus is one of the main attractions, even though the water is cold

and dark.

"It's always a night dive in the Puget Sound," half-joked volunteer diver Carl Harrington, who has been diving in the murky waters for 15 years.

Harrington didn't see an octopus during his census dive, but he did see plenty of other creatures, including a ratfish (a relative of the shark), sculpins and others.

"Diving here, it's just amazing how much life there is here, just teeming underneath the ocean," Harrington said, adding that one of the rare sights for divers is the massive bottom-dwelling six-gill shark that sometimes makes a trip to the shallows.

Octopuses themselves can be challenging to spot. They are nocturnal and hide in their dens during the day. The divers use flashlights and dive in areas historically known for being octopus homes.

While Harrington was unlucky, other divers in his party spotted octopuses.

"They were hiding in their holes sleeping. They had been eating because there were shells all around them," volunteer diver Kathryn Arant said. □

Scientists abandon highly publicized claim about cosmic find

MALCOLM RITTER
AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists who made headlines last March by announcing that they'd found long-sought evidence about the early universe are now abandoning that claim.

New data show that their cosmic observations no longer back up that conclusion, they say.

The original announcement caused a sensation because it appeared to show evidence that the

universe ballooned rapidly a split-second after its birth, in what scientists call cosmic inflation. That idea had been widely believed, but researchers had hoped to bolster it by finding a particular trait in light left over from the very early universe.

That signal is what the researchers claimed they had found in observations of the sky taken from the South Pole, in a project called BICEP2.

But now, in a new paper

submitted for publication, "we are effectively retracting the claim," said Brian Keating of the University of California, San Diego, a member of the BICEP2 team.

"It's disappointing," he said in a telephone interview Friday after the European Space Agency publicized the results. "It's like finding out there's no Santa Claus. But it's important to know the truth."

The new analysis was conducted by BICEP2 re-

searchers plus scientists who worked with the European Planck satellite, which provided new data to help interpret the original observations.

In essence, Keating said, the analysis shows that the source of the signal observed by BICEP2 isn't necessarily the very early universe. Instead, it's equally likely to have come from dust in our galaxy, which would mean it does not provide the evidence BICEP2 had claimed. □

Date night or moms night off: moviegoers plan for 'Fifty'



In this image released by Universal Pictures and Focus Features, Jamie Dornan, left, and Dakota Johnson appear in a scene from "Fifty Shades of Grey."

Associated Press

LEANNE ITALIE

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Brit-tany Brown wouldn't miss the opening of the "Fifty Shades of Grey" movie for anything. She has read and re-read all three books, uses the app, follows FSOG role play on Twitter and set her DVR to record trailers for the highly anticipated Valentine's weekend release.

But ditching her boyfriend for her gal gang of superfans was problematic.

"Feb. 14 is actually his birthday. He'll go out with his guy friends and I'll see FSOG with my friends. Later that evening we'll all meet up to party. We'll celebrate Valentine's Day on Sunday as a couple," said Brown, a 22-year-old public relations intern in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Three years in the waiting, the opening of the erotic romance on sweethearts' weekend will be a breathless affair for "Fifty" die-hards everywhere.

Some will have husbands in tow. Some already have tickets. And those book groups of mommies that helped propel the bondage story to more than 100 million copies sold? They'll be crowding theaters, too. Lyss Stern in New York will be one of them with 50 friends, including some very expectant ones.

"Hopefully nobody will go into labor," she laughed.

Stern, 40, throws mom-centric social events for a living and once feted "Fifty" writer EL James at the height of mania over the books. Come Feb. 13, Stern will be handing out treats to her buddies when they take their seats in a Manhattan theater. She'll include special sweets and other, er, stuff.

"There will be some fun toys, of course," she promised. "It's the most buzzed-about film in the mommy world in a long time. It's a 'Sex and the City' kind of excitement. We know it's not going to win an Oscar, but we also know it's going to be fun."

In North Hampton, New Hampshire, you can count Lou Altman wholeheartedly, completely voluntarily, in.

"My wife and I have been planning this date since the movie was announced," said the 50-year-old head of a satellite communications company. "Any half-smart husband will go see this movie with his wife. There WILL be a payoff."

The ticket-buying site Fandango said pre-sales have propelled "Fifty Shades" into the 15-year-old company's all-time Top 5 for R-rated selections. Several hundred screenings have already sold out. Some are in unanticipated hot spots, including Tupelo, Mississippi, and Chattanooga, Tennes-

see.

Jenna Mulford, manager of a two-screen independent cinema in Iowa Falls, Iowa, will have quite a weekend on her hands. At her Metropolitan Opera House, which it once was, she'll offer the faith-based "Old Fashioned," a sweet look at abstinence outside of marriage, along with "Fifty Shades."

She's sure there will be crossover, and a lively lobby conversation or two. Mulford reached out to churches in her area to make sure they knew "Old Fashioned" was coming while fielding numerous queries for "Fifty." "The curiosity is going to pull them toward one and their faith is going to pull them toward the other," Mulford predicted.

Outscreened and outfunded, the creators of "Old Fashioned" held its release to open against "Fifty Shades," poking fun along the way in trailers that flash cheeky taglines. "Love is ... anything but grey," reads one.

Rik Swartzwelder stars in "Old Fashioned" as small-town antiques dealer Clay Walsh, a porn king turned Christian (of the religious, not Grey variety) who refuses to be alone with any woman he's not married to, including a free spirit who rents the apartment above his shop.

He also wrote, directed and

co-produced the movie, booked into about 200 theaters, and helped position it as the David up against the kinky Goliath on Valentine's weekend.

"It seemed like a unique time to say let's have this discussion," Swartzwelder said of the sexually disparate selections. "Who do we want to be?"

As Mulford juggles her church guests and "Fifty" fans, Universal Pictures has offered "Fifty" blockbuster treatment with wide release around the world for the holiday. So, in real life, exactly how large a shadow has been cast by the books?

According to a new Associated Press-WE tv survey of 1,315 adults, 2 in 10 Americans say they've heard "a great deal" (9 percent) or "quite a bit" (11 percent) about the books. Another 44 percent say they've heard at least something about them. Fifteen percent say they've actually read some. Even more — 22 percent — say they plan to see the movie.

Among those who have heard of the story, nearly 4 in 10 (39 percent) credit the popularity of the trilogy for making people more adventurous in their sex lives. Another 3 percent say it's made people less adventurous, and 57 percent say there's been no impact.

And the women take it

among fans: Nearly a quarter of women (24 percent) say they have read some part of the trilogy, compared with only 4 percent of men. Number crunching aside, Kendra Davis and her husband are among those who nabbed "Fifty" tickets in advance.

"My husband is not into 'Fifty Shades.' In fact, I'm sure he'll be surprised by the intensity and high level of intimacy in the film," said the 28-year-old Davis, who works for a nonprofit in the Cleveland area. "Since it's Valentine's Day, I'm sure a lot of women are using this opportunity for date night and turning up the heat in the bedroom."

Maybe not everybody.

Mandy Menaker, 26, and her 32-year-old sister, Jamie Menaker, are both in relationships, but they'll be leaving the menfolk at home. Valentine's Day is reserved for their partners but they're carrying on a sisterly tradition by heading together to "Fifty Shades" opening weekend.

"During Valentine's week we pick out the best 'worst movie' we can find and sneak beer into the theater," Mandy explained.

Ben Oduro, 27, a Bronx-raised talent agent, tried the first book but he didn't make it through. Yet he'll be at a theater — stealthily alone — on opening weekend. □

Marvel Comics debuting all-female Avengers team

JESSE J. HOLLAND
Associated Press

The ladies are taking the lead in one of Marvel Comics' top comic book properties, with an all-female Avengers team called "A-Force" debuting as the company intensifies efforts to bring more girls and women into its male-dominated fan base.

Not only will the book feature some of Marvel's well-known female heroes, it will be written by two of Marvel's female comic book writers, Marguerite K. Bennett and Willow Wilson.

Wilson, a Seattle comic book writer who helped break ground in 2013 with her "Ms. Marvel," the story of a Muslim female superhero, said women were rarely the focus of comic book superhero teams, usually in the role of a girlfriend or damsel in distress.

This book will challenge that script, Wilson said.

"I think that we're kind of asking some implicit questions with this line-up and one of them is: Do we respond to fe-



This photo provided by Marvel Comics shows the cover of the comic book, "A-Force," by two of Marvel's female comic book writers, Marguerite K. Bennett and Willow Wilson. The book debuts in May 2015.

Associated Press

male superhero teams in the same way that

we respond to superhero teams composed

primarily or entirely of men?" Wilson said. "So it is a bit of a risk, but it's a risk that's been shown to work."

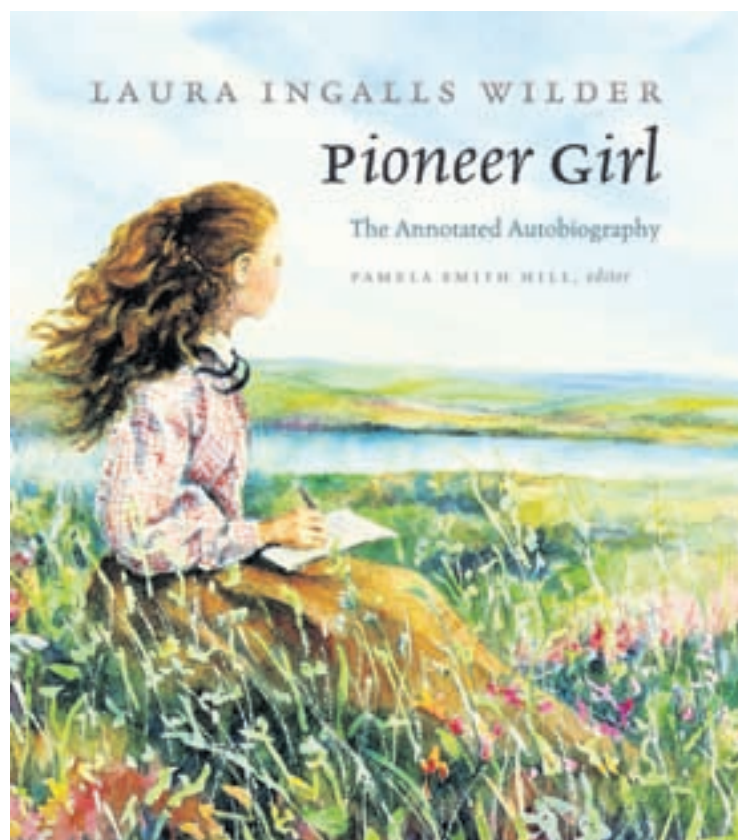
A-Force won't be Marvel's first all-female team, with successful runs of an all-female mutant team in "X-Men." When it debuts in May, it will join Marvel's 14 other female-led books, like Ms. Marvel and "Captain Marvel," which is scheduled to become a Marvel movie. DC Comics also has several female leads, including Batgirl, Catwoman, Batwoman and Wonder Woman, the longest-running comic book with a female hero.

A-Force — which will feature characters like She-Hulk, Dazzler and Medusa, as well as a new hero called Singularity — will hopefully get more women and girls to transition from successful superhero movies like "Marvel's The Avengers" and "The Dark Knight" to reading comic books, Wilson said. Part of the way forward is to have female characters take

the same kind of journeys taken by superheroes like Batman and Spider-Man and told from a female point of view, she said.

"There's a big push ... to have that same kind of recognizable, really enduring storytelling that appeals — not just to women readers but to men as well — and that reflects that same journey, that same coming of age, that same struggle that we all identify with through the eyes of female characters," Wilson said.

And while the majority of comic book buyers are male, millennials and Generation Xers are becoming more accepting of stories told from different points of view, she said. "In the past, when you had teams that were composed entirely of men and with maybe one woman, that was considered something very usual but to do the reverse was somehow unthinkable," she said. "We're at a time now where we can ask why that is." □



This undated image provided by the South Dakota Historical Society Press shows the book cover for "Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography."

Associated Press

PIERRE, South Dakota (AP) — The autobiog-

raphy of prairie author Laura Ingalls Wilder,

Laura Ingalls Wilder memoir a blockbuster for publisher

which gives a grittier view of American frontier living than her popular "Little House" series for children, is proving to be a blockbuster for a small state-owned publishing house.

"Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography," edited by Pamela Smith Hill, was released in November by the South Dakota Historical Society Press. The memoir, written for an adult audience, was the No. 1 best-seller on Amazon.com in late January and was still in the Top 10 on Friday, at No. 6.

"This is a definite blockbuster," publishing house director Nancy

Tystad Koupal told the Rapid City Journal. "I'm surprised, delighted and excited that Laura Ingalls Wilder's work still has such resonance with readers."

Wilder wrote her autobiography in the early 1930s. By then, she had been settled on her Missouri farm for decades, but her early life took the Ingalls family on a journey that includes what today is Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas and South Dakota.

The initial print run of the book was 15,000 copies. A second run of 15,000 copies was made, and a third run of 45,000 copies is on the press. A

fourth run is now being considered, according to Tystad Koupal.

"We have no cause for complaint, but just keeping up with the pace of it can be hard," she said.

"We have no more staff than we had before, so it means everybody is working double time."

Sioux Falls native Katie Franke received "Pioneer Girl" as a gift from a co-worker and is displaying it on the coffee table in her Burnsville, Minnesota, home, while she reads it.

"Growing up in South Dakota, Laura Ingalls is kind of a topic you can't escape," Franke told the Argus Leader. □

A Bad Mistake



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
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The decision by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and House Speaker John Boehner to cook up an address to Congress by Netanyahu on why the U.S. should get tougher on Iran is churlish, reckless and, for the future of Israeli-American relations, quite dangerous.

If Netanyahu wants some intelligent advice, he should listen to the counsel of his previous ambassador in Washington, the widely respected Michael Oren, who was quoted as saying that the whole gambit was creating the impression of "a cynical political move, and it could hurt our attempts to act against Iran." He urged Netanyahu to cancel the speech.

And if Netanyahu and his current ambassador in Washington, Ron Dermer, who organized the gambit with Boehner, want to know how offensive the whole thing is to average Americans they should listen to conservative "Fox News Sunday" talk show host Chris Wallace, not a usual critic of Israel, who gutsily said of the Bibi invite on Friday, Jan. 23: "To make you get a sense of really how, forgive me, wicked, this whole thing is, the Secretary of State John Kerry met with the Israeli ambassador to the United States for two hours on Tuesday, and Ron Dermer, the Israeli ambassador, according to the State Department, never mentioned the fact that Netanyahu was in negotiations and finally agreed to come to Washington, not to see the president, but to go to Capitol Hill, speak to a joint session of Congress and criticize the president's policy. I have to say I'm shocked."

Imagine that Israel's Labor Party invited President Barack Obama to address its Parliament about why Israel should give negotiations on Iran more time, and it was all worked out with the U.S. ambassador in Tel Aviv behind the back of the Likud Party prime minister. A lot of Israelis would see it as an insult to their democratically elected leader.

I've polled many of my non-Jewish friends, who follow world politics and are sympathetic to Israel, and they really don't like this. It doesn't only disrespect our president, it disrespects our system and certain diplomatic boundaries that every foreign leader should respect and usually has.

You know how this happened: Netanyahu; his ambassador; the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC; Sheldon Adelson, the huge donor to Bibi and the GOP; and Boehner all live in their own self-contained bubble. You can tell that nobody was inside there telling them:

"Bibi, this speech to Congress two weeks before your election may give you a sugar high for a day with Israeli voters, but it's in really poor taste for you to use America's Congress as a backdrop for your campaign. Many of Israel's friends will be uncomfortable, and the anti-Semites, who claim Israel controls Washington, will have a field day."

Already, in reaction to this maneuver, 10 Senate Democrats - who had advocated putting more sanctions on Iran now - have instead parted company with the Republicans and granted the White House the two-month reprieve it was seeking to see if negotiations can still work. It was exactly the opposite of what Netanyahu wanted, and it shows how upset many Democrats are. But this isn't just churlish. For Israel's leader to so obviously throw his lot in with the Republicans against a Democratic president is reckless. Israel and its defenders are already under siege on college campuses across America, where many university boards are under pressure to divest from companies doing business with Israel. Making support for Israel more of a Republican cause is not at all in Israel's interest - or America's. Israel needs the support of more than just Congress or one party. Netanyahu's concerns about Iran are not without merit. But his aggressiveness is also not without critics in Israel. If the Congress wants to get Israel's perspective on how to deal with Iran, then it should also invite the top Israeli intelligence and military officers, current and retired, who have been arguing publicly against Netanyahu's threatened use of force against Iran. Why are we getting only one Israeli view? How is that in America's interest?

Personally, I'm still dubious that the U.S. and Iran will reach a deal that will defuse Iran's nuclear weapons program. Such a failure would be very serious and could end up, one day, with the U.S. deciding it has to use military force to set back Iran's program. We surely don't want Iran to get a bomb that sets off a nuclear arms race in an already unstable Middle East.

But, even if we do use force, success is hardly assured and the blowback unpredictable. That is why it is absolutely not in Israel's interest to give even the slightest appearance of nudging the U.S. toward such a military decision. Israel should stay a million miles away from that decision, making clear that it is entirely a U.S. matter. Because, if we do have to strike Iran, plenty of Americans will not be happy. And if it fails, or has costly consequences for us and our military, you can be sure a lot more Americans will not be happy - and some will ask, "How did we get into this mess?" One of the first things they'll dig out will be Netanyahu's speech to Congress.

Why in the world would Israel risk putting itself in that situation? Just lie low, Mr. Netanyahu. Don't play in our politics. Let America draw its own conclusions. □



'American Sniper' Moral



GAIL COLLINS
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Things we can learn from "American Sniper":

You know the movie, right? It has not only been nominated for the Best Picture Oscar, it could wind up selling more tickets than the other seven nominees combined. Plus, it's triggered a left-right controversy that makes the old dust-up over "Duck Dynasty" seem like a tiny cultural blip.

"American Sniper" tells the story of Chris Kyle, a real-life Iraq War veteran and sharpshooter. The film is certainly powerful, and it celebrates our Iraq veterans. But it also eulogizes the killing of Iraq insurgents, including children, and critics feel it ought to be put in the context of an invasion that didn't need to happen in the first place.

There's been less conversation about the final scene in the movie, which shows the hero walking through his family home, where the kids are romping. He's carrying a handgun, which he points at his wife Taya, playfully telling her to "drop them drawers." Taya says she can see he's finally getting over his war traumas and back to his old fun-loving self.

This is, by virtually any standard, insane behavior. Mike Huckabee, a big "American Sniper" fan, recently published a book

called "God, Guts, Griots and Gravy," which is so wildly opposed to any weapon regulation that Huckabee opens his chapter on modern education by complaining that public schools are anti-gun. Yet he also presents a list of universally accepted gun safety rules, many of which boil down to: don't point it at anybody as a joke.

"Yeah, but if you want to complain about the casual treatment of guns in movies, you don't have to look very hard on any Friday night," said Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut. Murphy hasn't seen the movie, but he's one of Congress' leading advocates of gun-control regulation. It's not the world's most rewarding job. In recent years, his colleagues have not only refused to pass an extremely modest bill on background checks, they've failed to ban the sale of guns to people on the terrorism watch list.

"American Sniper" is on one, supremely obvious level, a celebration of gun culture. But it's also a cautionary tale. The real Chris Kyle was shot to death while the script was being written. He had volunteered to help a troubled veteran, Eddie Ray Routh, who had a history of violent behavior and was an apparent victim of post-traumatic stress. Kyle felt the best way to get him to relax was to take him to a shooting range. While they were there, Routh turned his gun on Kyle, and one of Kyle's friends, killing them both. "American Sniper" could actually be seen, at least in the final scene, as a good-gun, bad-gun message. The real Chris Kyle did enjoy walking around the house, twirling a pistol. His wife said that as the clouds lifted after his Iraq service, he would playfully point a gun at the television and pretend to shoot down the bad guys.

Jason Hall, who wrote the movie screenplay, said the scene was meant to both show Kyle in recovery and presage the vio-

lence that was about to occur off-screen.

"There's a tension in the scene that builds toward the ending," he said in a phone interview.

The U.S. gun lobby has pushed its cause so far that it, too, may be falling off a cliff. Texas, where Chris Kyle's alleged murderer is going on trial next week, has always had a gun-friendly culture, so much so that visitors can bring concealed handguns into the state Capitol. Some people definitely do not think this goes far enough, and, on opening day of the Legislature last month, they demanded new laws making it legal to carry handguns in the open, preferably without a license.

One particularly bouncy group, Open Carry Tarrant County, flooded the office of Rep. Poncho Nevárez, a non-supportive Democrat. A video of the ensuing scene showed Nevárez, looking extremely wary, asking the demonstrators to leave his office, while one of them yelled back: "I'm asking you to leave my state." When Nevárez tried to close his door, one of the protesters stuck his foot in it. This was all happening, remember, in a building where carrying concealed weapons is perfectly fine. When it was all over, some legislators in both parties wore "I'm Poncho" badges in solidarity with Nevárez, who was assigned a security detail after he and his family received threats.

The leader of Open Carry Tarrant County, Kory Watkins, then posted another video in which he claimed that the resistant lawmakers were forgetting their duty was "to protect the Constitution. And let me remind you: Going against the Constitution is treason. And treason is punishable by death."

Meanwhile, in the Texas Capitol, enthusiasm for watering down the gun laws seems to be dwindling. That could qualify as a happy ending. □



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